



Guariento, Bill (2019) *Pre-sessional English language courses: university telecollaboration as a driver of Global North / South student-contact for engineers*. PhD thesis awarded by published work.

<http://theses.gla.ac.uk/81747/>

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

Pre-sessional English language courses: university telecollaboration as a driver of Global North / South student-contact for engineers

William (Bill) Guariento M.A.

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of PhD

School of Education

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

July 2019

Total word-count (includes explanatory essay, bibliographies and Knowledge Exchange
Output 7, excludes other appendices): 95,395 words.

Table of Contents

<i>Summary</i>	4
<i>List of Accompanying Material</i>	7
Papers	7
Knowledge Exchange Outputs (see also appendix 1)	8
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	10
<i>Author Declaration</i>	11
<i>Abbreviations</i>	12
<i>Explanatory Essay</i>	13
<i>Published papers (presented in chronological order)</i>	33
Paper 1:	33
Innovation management issues raised by a distance-learning project in Eritrea: can such projects be successfully transplanted from one developing country to another?	33
Paper 2:	46
Task and Text Authenticity in the EFL classroom	46
Paper 3:	54
‘How can we reach them?’	54
Paper 4:	61
Investigating EAST (English for Academic Study Tele-collaboration). A UK- Palestine English Language Project for Engineering and Science Graduates	61
Paper 5:	89
A UK-Palestine online EAP collaboration for science graduates	89
Paper 6:	92
Establishing and sustaining EAP student partnerships across borders	92
Paper 7:	144
Constructive Feedback Course	144
Paper 8:	180
Constructive content-based feedback in EAP contexts: lessons from a cross-border engineering-related pre-session course	180
Paper 9:	201
‘Really Talking’ to Gaza: from Active to Transformative Learning in distributed environments and under highly pressured conditions	201
Paper 10:	225
Four years of Glasgow-Gaza pre-session English telecollaboration: reflections from an ethical perspective	225
Appendix 1 - Knowledge Exchange Outputs	246
Appendix 2 - Acknowledgement of co-author percentage contributions	304

Appendix 3 – Data-collection instruments:	309
Appendix 4 – Sample information sheets / consent forms:	317
Appendix 5 – University of Glasgow graduate attributes:	348
Appendix 6 – Summary of pre-sessional programme, including schematic form to show how EAST fits:	349

Summary

Combining empirical evidence and conceptual argument I argue that online project-work with the Global South can become a pillar for future pre-sessional language support at UK higher education institutions. The evidence-based nature of this work is key, but the papers presented in this submission move beyond methodology, examining the ethical and institutional prerequisites for (and potential barriers to) reciprocal North-South benefits in projects of this nature.

For many students, mastery of English is key factor in accessing high quality university education, as universities in the English-speaking world continue to predominate in global rankings. Many overseas students choose to enter these courses via summer pre-sessional programmes, which provide English language tuition along with an initial acculturation into western academia. In an increasingly market-oriented higher education system, universities devote significant resources to attracting international students.

In the case of the United Kingdom, a small number of countries (led by China and Saudi Arabia) predominate as student-providers. This imbalance has negative consequences both for the students who possess the financial means to undertake pre-sessional study (who, often unexpectedly, find themselves in classes full of their co-nationals) and for those who are unable to travel to the UK as a consequence of social and/or economic factors. This thesis presents research based on five years of a summer pre-sessional English programme - the English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) Project - that has aimed to address both of these issues.

Since 2015, overseas students on the University of Glasgow's pre-sessional Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) programme have partnered peers at the Islamic University of Gaza through online collaboration projects. Students in Gaza provide initial engineering challenges to be investigated, and are trained in techniques enabling them to provide constructive feedback. Following this, Glasgow-Gaza groups work together over five weeks, to try to address the challenges identified, using English as a medium to solve real-life problems.

This thesis analyses and discusses the benefits of telecollaboration in general, but juxtaposes them with the specific insights gained from the EAST telecollaborations between the Global North and Global South. These are integrated with reflections on the dynamics between the online collaborations and the author's previous distance learning experience within the Global South (Eritrea) and the Global North (Scotland). Together, these offer an original contribution and develop knowledge and understanding in relation to two broad themes:

Theme 1: Providing SET students with a language-learning experience that has transformative potential

Previous online partnerships have already demonstrated that collaborations of this nature can be of great pedagogical value. But this research, while detailing the added challenges presented by Global North / South online collaboration, suggests that they can actually offer specific strengths when viewed from a Freirean perspective, providing students with learning opportunities about the real-world that are more often than not absent in intra-Global North exchanges. Evidence is presented to suggest that the increased risks are worthwhile, as there are multifaceted opportunities for deep-seated learning.

Theme 2: Acknowledging and mitigating power imbalances

The second theme examines the disconnect between what Global South partners would like, and what they have to take. The 'gatekeeping' nature of the Glasgow pre-sessional currently allows students to collaborate in the process, but not in the product; the output has to provably be written by the Glasgow-based student alone. Our Global South partners have had to take on a limiting and uncomfortable role (that of mere 'content-provider') just to be involved with a university of prestige. In short, the apparent successes, as seen from our Glasgow perspective, are without doubt derived from power imbalances which this thesis analyses in detail.

The thesis is comprised of ten publications (nine peer-reviewed) listed in the Accompanying Materials section which follows. All are available via Enlighten. Percentage of authorship follows each item. The earliest three papers focus respectively on ethical issues related to Global South distance education projects, the crucial role of authentic communication in English-language teaching tasks, and the importance and challenges of working at a distance

to improve the English language skills of SET students: these form the foundation for the subsequent work on project-based learning for SET students between the Global North and South. Papers 4 and 5 analyse the first EAST Project. Paper 6 reports on EAST 2 (which expanded the project via a relatively unsuccessful attempt to include Biomed students). Paper 7 is the Constructive Feedback course, written to develop the support-attributes needed by EAST Project mentors and available via creative commons. Paper 8 analyses learning-outcomes from this Constructive Feedback course. Paper 9 looks specifically at potential for transformative learning offered by telecollaborative work, and Paper 10 offers reflections on ethical issues linked to Global North / South telecollaboration that emerged from EAST Projects 1 through 4. An initial explanatory essay justifies the intellectual significance of the individual articles. KEO 7 is a key concluding publication, reflecting in depth on the five iterations of EAST held to date, its impact on all stakeholders, and the issues of power that have emerged.

List of Accompanying Material

(% authorship follows each / Papers and Knowledge Exchange Outputs are all available via Enlighten).

Papers

Explanatory essay: Guariento B. (2020) (100% authorship)

Paper 1: Guariento, B. (1997) Innovation management issues raised by a distance-learning project in Eritrea: Can such projects be successfully transplanted from one developing country to another? *System*, Volume 25, Issue 3, Pages 399-407 (100%)

Paper 2: Guariento, B. & Morley, J. (2001) Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom, *ELT Journal*, Volume 55, Issue 4, Pages 347–353 (60%)

Paper 3: Daborn, E. & Guariento, B. (2002) ‘How can we reach them?’ In *Supporting student learning*, Crosling, G. & Webb, G. (eds), Kogan Page, London, ISBN 9780749435356 (50%)

Paper 4: Guariento, B., Al-Masri, N. & Rolinska, A. (2016) Investigating EAST (A Scotland-Gaza English for Academic Study Telecollaboration between SET Students). *American Society for Engineering Education 123rd Annual Conference Proceedings*, New Orleans, USA (45%)

Paper 5: Guariento, B. and Rolinska, A. (2016) A UK-Palestine online EAP collaboration for science graduates. *International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Conference Proceedings*, Birmingham, UK, ISBN 9781901095890 (50%)

Paper 6: Rolinska, A., Guariento, B. & Al-Masri, N. (2017) English for Specific Academic Purposes Student Partnerships Across Borders. *British Council English Language Teaching Research Paper*. ISBN 978-0-86355-856-6 (45%)

Paper 7: Rolinska, A. & Guariento, B. (2017) Constructive Feedback Course. <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/project-media/constructive-feedback-course/> University of Glasgow (50%)

Paper 8: Guariento, B., Rolinska, A. & Al-Masri, N. (2018) Constructive content-based feedback in EAP contexts, *Higher Education Research & Development*, Volume 37, Issue 3, pages 514 – 532 (45%)

Paper 9: Rolinska, A., Guariento, B. Abouda, G. & Nakprada, O. (2019) “Really Talking”: from Active to Transformative Learning in distributed environments and under

highly pressured conditions, in *"Can you hear me?" Engaging multilingually in online international academic collaborations when borders are impassable*. Phipps, A., Al-Masri, N. & Fassetta, G. (eds) Bristol: Multilingual Matters, in press (45%)

Paper 10: Guariento, B. (2019) Four years of Glasgow-Gaza pre-sessional English telecollaboration: reflections from an ethical perspective, in *"Can you hear me?" Engaging multilingually in online international academic collaborations when borders are impassable*. Phipps, A., Al-Masri, N. & Fassetta, G. (eds) Bristol: Multilingual Matters, in press (100%)

Knowledge Exchange Outputs (see also Appendix 1)

KEO 1: Guariento, B. and Rolinska, A. EAST Project website, July 2015 to 2019, <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/another-video-from-gaza/#more-362>

KEO 2: Guariento, B. and Rolinska, A. University of Glasgow Explorathon, 'The EAST Project', 25/9/15, <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/2015/09/27/east-project-and-global-glasgow/>

KEO 3: Fox, A., Rolinska, A. and Guariento, B. (2016) Absolutely Intercultural Podcast 207: 'Absolutely Engineered' [Audio], 7/10/16, <https://www.absolutelyintercultural.com/?m=2016>

KEO 4: Gomes, L., Guariento, B., and Rolinska, A. (2018) 'UofG Welcomes Palestinian Students', 13/2/18, https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/arts/aboutus/news/artsarchive/2018/headline_571817_en.html

KEO 5: Guariento, B. (2018) 'Gaza – Glasgow collaborations', 9/10/18, https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/news/uofginternational/headline_617431_en.html
University of Glasgow

KEO 6: Guariento, B., Rolinska, A., Hutton, W. and de Moraes Garcia, D. N. (2019) British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes Webinar: 'Telecollaboration with the Global South'. [Website], 14/3/19, <https://www.baleap.org/event/webinar-telecollaboration>

KEO 7: Guariento, B. 2020. British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes Social Justice Special Interest Group blogpost: 'Pre-sessional English language courses: University telecollaboration as a driver of Global North-South student-contact for engineers, 6/6/20, <https://eap4socialjustice.net/2020/06/06/pre-sessional-english-language-courses-university-telecollaboration-as-a-driver-of-global-north-south-student-contact-for-engineers/>

KEO 8: Guariento, B., Al Masri, N., Abuzayed, A., Rolinska, A. & Mandala, W. 2020. Global North/South Telecollaboration, 1/7/20. British Council English Language Teaching Webinar: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/global-north-south-project-based-learning-student-student-telecollaboration-language>

Acknowledgements

The EAST Project would not have been possible without the unflagging enthusiasm and organisational ability of the team at the Islamic University of Gaza, led by Professors Nazmi al Masri and Ahmed Muhaisen, and the support provided by Celine Reynaud and her team within Student Services at the University of Glasgow, who have organised the visits of students and staff from Gaza. Alison Phipps proved of key and recurring help at various pinch-points over the past 5 years (unfortunately, border-closures have been beyond the powers of either Celine or Alison to influence), and I am particularly grateful to her for her supervision of this thesis. Anna Rolinska's help in organising / running / writing up the various EASTs was crucial; I really hope that we will continue to work together. Anneli Williams allowed the organisers the freedom to experiment within the pre-sessional course in Glasgow. Finally, I would like to thank Giovanna for detailed and valuable comments on various drafts of these papers and, more importantly, support and encouragement throughout.

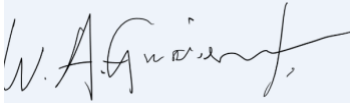
Degree of PhD by Published Work

Author Declaration

I, William (Bill) Anthony Guariento, declare that this is my own work and to my knowledge has not been submitted in any form for another degree or been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue rectangular background. The signature is written in a cursive style, starting with a large 'W' and ending with a long horizontal stroke.

Date: 3/7/2020

Abbreviations

ASEE	American Society for Engineering Education
CC	Creative Commons
CFC	Constructive Feedback Course
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EAS	English for Academic Study (unit at the University of Glasgow)
EAST Project	English for Academic Study Telecollaboration Project
EEE	Electronic and Electrical Engineering
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELTRA	English Language Teaching Research Award
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
INACAP	Universidad Tecnológica de Chile
IUG	Islamic University of Gaza (Palestine)
L2	Second Language
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MUST	Malawi University of Science and Technology
NS / NNS	Native Speaker / Non-Native Speaker
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PUCV	Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso
SET	Science Engineering and Technology
SPRE	Situation-Problem-Response-Evaluation
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UoG / UofG	University of Glasgow
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Explanatory Essay

Pre-sessional English language courses: Telecollaboration as a driver for Global North / South student-to-student contact for engineers

Background and rationale

At a time of widening inequalities, there is a need for links at university across geographical, social, racial and political divides, and students from the Global South have much to offer; many combine knowledge of their chosen fields with solid English language skills, and share with their Global North peers a desire to further develop their subject-knowledge and language abilities, and to learn about other cultures. Contact between students from the Global North and the Global South would be of mutual benefit (East, 2012) but, even though telecollaboration must now be considered mainstream in many fields (O'Dowd, 2018; Plutino et al., 2019), and despite notable advances in connectivity (O'Dowd and O'Rourke, 2019), it remains almost an exclusively intra-Global North phenomenon (Starke-Meyerring and Wilson, 2008; Helm, 2015); Global North to South telecollaboration is significantly under-exploited.

This thesis represents an attempt to redress this situation, and breaks entirely new ground in its examination of issues deriving from a specifically *pre-sessional* telecollaboration initiative with the Global South. It centres on a collection of empirical and conceptual papers that explore distance-learning in and with the Global South, focusing in particular on the genesis and evolution of a telecollaborative project linking university students in Scotland and Palestine; the latter is an area of the world where students have to confront and overcome social injustice and conflict (Aouragh, 2001; Fassetta et al, 2017) that we, as students and academics from the Global North, can scarcely comprehend.

These papers present evidence for a significant – in some cases transformative – overall raising of intercultural awareness among participants, building in particular solidarity among the Global North participants (Hammond, 2012), and enabling a ‘witnessing’ (Freire, 1996) for the students from Palestine. Given the importance of overseas students to UK higher education (UKCISA, 2018), almost all universities run pre-sessional English language

courses; if some were to adopt similar links with partner institutions in the Global South, the impact could be very considerable.

Chronologically, the papers included here can be divided into three phases (see Figure 1).

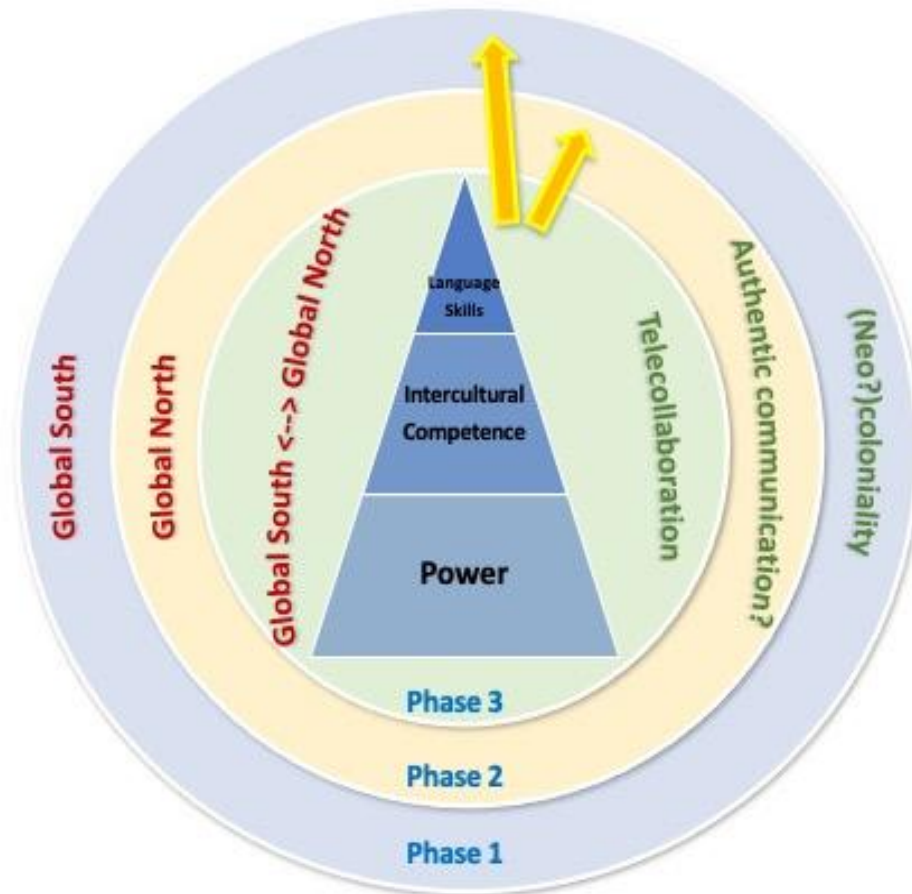


Figure 1. Chronological / Conceptual development of Global North-South project-work

Phase One outlines work carried out over a two-year period in Eritrea (**paper 1**), which provided the author with an introduction to the multitude of ways in which shortages of social, financial and cultural capital combine to the detriment of students from the Global South, and a first opportunity to explore distance-education responses to these challenges.

Phase Two presents work grounded in a UK-university context, looking first at what constitutes the ‘authentic’ in spoken and written communication (**paper 2**), and then at ways

to exploit distance-education methods to foster an engagement with academic discourse among home-based engineering students (**paper 3**).

Phase Three constitutes the bulk of the thesis, and presents a telecollaborative language-focused initiative – the English for Academic Studies Telecollaboration (EAST) project - between engineering students at the University of Glasgow and at the Islamic University of Gaza. This phase combines **the remaining papers** and a variety of knowledge-exchange outputs (**KEOs**) that span a five-year period, from 2015 to 2020.

Theoretical underpinnings

This thesis was written over a twenty-year period, initially from the stimulus of two years spent as a volunteer English language teacher in Eritrea, and then working on English language courses delivered at universities in the UK. The potential for a coherent whole began to take form in 2016, though the papers presented here, pre- and post-2016, share a social constructive ontology which assumes that social actors are continually creating social phenomena and their meanings (Alasutaari et al, 2008). The papers adopt an interpretivist epistemology (Willis and Edwards, 2014), looking to understand the subjective meaning of social action, recognising that the contextual complexities of education allow no clear answers, but that practitioners' research, combined with reflection shared by all participants, can allow potentially useful responses to emerge in a collaborative, interactive and inherently social manner (Bourdieu, 2004). An interest in issues relating to social justice (van der Wende, 2017; Ladegaard and Phipps, 2020) and to the importance of an 'ethics of care' (Held, 2006) is the thread that links all three phases, and the papers presented here are underpinned by Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1996) and by Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach (Nussbaum, 2013). There is a growing focus on inclusivity in the later papers, and an adoption of a more critical stance.

The focus on Gaza is not a casual choice. The Gaza Strip is subject to a politico-economic isolation of great injustice which impacts immensely on its inhabitants (Imperiale, 2017; PCBS, 2018). For pragmatic reasons – my own position as pre-sessional course director with some small agency over local curricular choices – any medium-term impacts deriving from the ideas presented in this thesis are more likely to accrue to the Global North student studying pre-sessionally in the UK, rather than their Global South telecollaborative partner in

the Gaza Strip. However, the main driver from the beginning has been the realisation that the Gazan student has a voice, but lacks an audience, and EAST represents an attempt to bring the Global South student's voice and audience together; as Ronald Barnett in his seminal work 'A will to learn' (2007: 90) puts it, "to authentically place herself in the world".

Methodological Development

Figure 1 also reveals a methodological development. Two years' teaching as a volunteer English teacher in Eritrea brought the author's first considerations – in particular regarding the value of the English language to the children in a Global South primary school, the position of women within the Eritrean primary education system, and potential power implications of my own position– which were reified in the production of a Masters dissertation, and subsequently by paper 1, each of which emerged from **reflection** (Dewey, 1910; Wright Mills, 1959; Schön, 1983) on these experiences. On entering the UK higher education system as a part-time teacher, these experiences provided the foundation for a more **critical reflection** (Barnett, 1997; Day, 2012; Benade, 2015) juxtaposing not only the privileges offered to the Global North university-student with those offered her Global South counterpart, but also a consideration of lacunae, particularly in terms of intercultural contact for the Global North university-student, and once again a consideration of my own position as a teacher within this system; this extended period of critical reflection led to the desire to link Global North and South in project work. The various iterations of EAST adopted different kinds of analyses in sequence but integrated with a **participatory action research** approach (Grant et al, 2008). These analyses – whose methodological development is outlined on the following page – stemmed from my desire to introduce a social justice element within an already-existing pre-sessional course, and evolved from 2015 to 2020.

The three methodologies just listed map approximately onto the three phases outlined by figure 1. Although as Bryman (2008: 370) notes, the boundaries between these qualitative approaches are not always clear-cut, the common feature throughout the three phases is that of reflexivity. The data gathered in the extended period represented by Phase 2 include the myriad interactions of a UK university course administrator, an **emergent practice** approach (Fay, 2004) in which the author's thinking was curated by tracking work via paper, web, e-mail or face-to-face contacts with colleagues and students, "the mundane interactions that lead to adopting particular concepts and understandings" (Day, 2012: 78). Phase 2 was

undertaken without an intention to proceed to research, but as Glaser and Strauss (1967, 227) point out, such negotiation of everyday academic life can facilitate making a “normal strategy of reflective persons into a successful research strategy”. The reflections that these interactions engendered developed, in a critical manner, ideas from phase 1, continued throughout phase 2, and in turn informed the evolving methodological approaches of phase 3.

To look at the methodological development of phase 3 in more detail, the papers written in 2015 and 2016 follow a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative data in 2015 explored the extent to which participants benefited from the addition of a telecollaborative project (EAST) to an already extant pre-sessional course, in order to look specifically at: perceived improvements in speaking and listening skills; increased intercultural awareness; teamwork; subject-specific knowledge; digital literacies. Positive feedback (see **papers 4 and 5**) encouraged a broadening of EAST in 2016, to embrace both engineers and biomedical students. **Paper 6** presents contingency tables which, combined with open-ended questions, allowed an examination of differences between these two separate cohorts, and provided possible reasons for the higher student-feedback ratings for the engineering version of EAST, particularly from Gaza.

Taken together, the first two years of EAST can be retroactively seen as a pilot, and resulted in a decision to deepen the collaboration, but focusing on engineering students, who were considered a priority group by our Gazan partner-institution. The quantitative data provided by the initial two iterations of EAST were of pragmatic importance, providing numeric justification for continued institutional commitment to the project from the University of Glasgow, and these first two years were also crucial in generating trust from our partner in Gaza; both issues are explored at length in **KEO 7**. However, as **papers 4, 5 and 6** already presaged, the most interesting findings were emerging from the *qualitative* data provided by the students. The methodology adopted post-2017 built on their responses to the open-ended questions, and adopts a mix of qualitative approaches.

The EAST project is an extended case-study (Burawoy, 2009), one which is bounded both in terms of space (online) and of time (from 2015 to 2019, five 5-week courses). Alongside the quantitative data outlined above, qualitative responses to the cross-sectional open-ended questions at the end of each of these courses are available for each of the five years, and these have been triangulated with field notes taken by the author / a teachers' focus group (see

KEO 7), and with a thick description (**paper 9**) provided by an ethnography of two students (one a Glasgow-based Thai student, one a student in Gaza). Starting from 2017, ongoing categorisation and re-categorisation of these data-inputs led to the emergence of two research questions regarding pre-sessional telecollaboration between Global North – South stakeholders:

- What evidence exists for transformative outcomes?
- How do issues of power impact the exchanges?

Papers **7 and 8** report on the Constructive Feedback course, written to prepare the Gazan students for their role in supporting Glasgow-based students in their studies. Interesting data were already emerging regarding the transformative potential of Global North - South telecollaboration, but the need to channel Gazan feedback to Glasgow-based students in terms of content / mode of delivery raised issues relating to the ethics of imposing such constraints and, in turn, of the underlying power-imbalances inherent in North – South ‘partnership’.

Developing from the micro-perspective of ethnography (**paper 9**) these issues of power are developed at a meso-level of inter-institutional relationships (**paper 10**). **KEO 7** steps back to provide a macro-level analysis. Coding of a range of qualitative data from all five EAST projects presents evidence of transformative outcomes for students at both institutions across a range of areas, but also of hopes for a wider role felt by many students from Gaza, and a wish expressed by some in Gaza for greater freedom to express their desires and frustrations. This data is combined with focus-group input from teachers and my own field notes to inform macro-level reflections on how EAST might be situated within, and perhaps ideally even to subvert, wider power structures and the neo-liberal ethos that is driving Twenty First Century higher education in the UK (Morrissey, 2015).

Conceptual Development

The conceptual development of phase three is represented by the triangle within figure 1. The papers produced in this phase illustrate how the original rationale for / focus of EAST, i.e. the enhancement of students’ language skills, gradually broadened to reflect the

intercultural inquisitiveness of the students, fostered by their online interactions. This then further broadened as wider issues of power emerged, affecting all stakeholders in the project – the students, the teachers, the institutions, and myself as course-organiser. This broadening also represents my own struggle to marry the initial and ongoing outcomes-based focus of my employer (pass-grades for the Glasgow-based students) with my own growing realisation that the underlying processes, the ‘becomings’ (Barnett, 2007: 144) of the stakeholders, are almost certainly of greater long-term significance. A key aspect of this ‘becoming’ is a raised awareness of points of intercultural commonality between Global North and South, and of how concerns relating to social justice need to be intertwined with the content and experiences that students in Glasgow live during their stay in the UK, in order to foster a - potentially transformative - whole.

A reverse-side of transformation is the continuing exclusion experienced by Global South students. **KEO 7** forms a link back to **paper 1**, exploring the ways in which a post-colonial legacy in education still remains entrenched (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), despite the interconnections of today’s world. **KEO 7** also draws on Foucault’s concept of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault, 1994), noting the ways it controls (and hence excludes) not just those from the Global South; **KEO 7** also makes the point that the Covid-related crisis brings renewed neoliberal threats to university work practices (Brabazon, 2020), and suggests that socially-aware online practices (such as EAST) must be available to counter drives for the ‘efficiencies’ that online delivery can bring, which are likely to become more pressing as lockdown ends and which, if unquestioned (Shor et al., 2017), risk becoming the new default.

Overall, this thesis shows that the challenges facing the introduction of a social justice agenda and the challenges of project-sustainability, both of which were originally encountered in Eritrea, remain. However, the thesis also posits that the affordances of the internet, which provide authentic social settings unimaginable 20 years ago (East, 2012; Plutino et al., 2019), in combination with an approach to telecollaboration that combines language, culture and content (Helm, 2015; Parks, 2020), still provide potential in higher education for a subversion of the power structures mentioned above (Shor et al. 2017), a resistance to the neo-liberal ethos (Morrissey, 2015), and a decolonising of the curriculum (Guilherme, 2007; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), each of which were less easily-accessed by distance-educators when this process of investigation began. The links from the EAST projects back to these challenges / affordances are represented on figure 1 by the vertical arrows.

From the findings of the various papers presented here, three themes emerge: exclusion; authenticity; personal transformations.

Discussion

Theme 1: Exclusion

The initial articles reflect an assumption, still common in the academic literature of the time (see e.g. Honey, 1997; Graddol, 1997), that more widespread access to English was, in and of itself, a desirable outcome. **Paper 1** reports on a project, pre-Internet, which aimed to broaden the reach of English within Eritrean primary schools, combining a cassette-based course with a programme of teacher-training. **Paper 4** reports on the first iteration of the EAST telecollaborative project, making use of the Internet to combine students at a UK university with peers in Gaza. The move from cassette-based to Internet-based delivery represented a technological shift and, in narrow terms, the EAST project addressed what Helm (2015: 212) terms the need for “pre-packaged telecollaboration projects with a more or less fixed curriculum, duration, and assessment tools”, and the near-total lack of telecollaborative projects that involve the Global South. However, the paradigms remained broadly similar; largely top-down initiatives premised on ‘removing’ exclusion by widening access (to the English language, and to the educational opportunities that mastery of this language can allow). Enabling more participants access to knowledge and skills thus viewed subjugation as being in the main a question of resource-access, and the solutions available to be achievable without questioning my own role, the broader institutional frameworks within which I was operating, and the impact of the English language itself on the cultural integrity of the learner (Phillipson, 1992; Modiano, 1999; Pennycook, 2007). A realisation that initiatives such as these may be tokenistic, and that the issue of exclusion is much broader and multi-faceted, emerges from the later papers presented here, which aim to address issues of wider epistemological dominance, looking for spaces in which the voices of marginalised groups might be centred and disruption to existing power structures attempted (Canagarajah and Selim, 2013). In short, from **Paper 7** onwards ‘exclusion’ is seen as more than a question of simple numbers or geography, and one in which the exclusionary effects of *discourses* have been examined.

Freire's Critical Pedagogies (1996) has provided a valuable framework. Freire champions the 'conscientization' of marginalised groups, a raising of awareness of their own excluded positions within educational, economic and political systems and the ways in which this exclusion tends to perpetuate inequality, and the need for participants themselves to take action. However, I would argue that there is less need for such conscientization in Gaza than in most areas of the Global South; Gazan students live the experience of blockade on a daily basis and are well-informed regarding the underlying socio-political causes of these injustices (Phipps, 2014; Marie et al, 2018). Conversely, there is space of real potential value for a raising of awareness *among the more privileged, Glasgow-based students* of how systems of education interact with wider social and economic systems to maintain inequality worldwide. Many of these students may otherwise never have cause to engage with / benefit from Global South peers and to understand what living side-by-side with deprivation, even conflict, means, nor the opportunity by so doing "to develop as activist citizens inspired by democracy, equality, ecology and peace" (Freire, 1996: 10).

Such an opportunity is provided by a problem-solving dialogue based on the Gazan context. An exploitation of context is (alongside 'conscientization') a crucial part of a Critical Pedagogies approach (Freire, 1996: 64), has been a key achievement of EAST, and moves centre-stage in the later articles presented here. The dialogue and reflection that results from the contextualised project-work and the telecollaborative interchanges in many cases generate what Freire terms 'hinged themes' (ibid: 101) which are able to raise Global North students' understanding of social justice beyond the circumscribed engineering issues that they investigate, and which emerge (crucially, in Freirean terms), from challenges *that have been chosen by the Gazan students*. Engineers in particular are not often called on to address issues of social justice; talking specifically of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field, Weinstein et al (2016: 201) note what they see as a particularly concerning tendency to "reinforce and legitimize a neoliberal hegemony of global competition and capitalist expansionism".

EAST counters this tendency, encouraging student-engineers to re-phrase a default question such as 'How am I to provide clean drinking water to this area?' to the far more challenging 'Why is the aquifer so dangerously low?', or even 'Who is taking most of the water?'. Such an opportunity is, within the context of a UK university pre-session programme, quite subversive, and the critical thinking it can stimulate may challenge what Phipps & Gonzalez

(in Crosbie, 2005: 301) identify as the strong “institutional pressures towards uniformity and containment”. While it may not be possible, within these institutional constraints, to develop anything that could be labelled ‘social action’, chances to allow the formation of such questions, and by so doing to challenge discourses of exclusion, certainly do exist. The Global South contexts, chosen (and then developed) by students from the Gaza Strip, are absolutely key.

Theme 2: Authenticity

What constitutes ‘authenticity’ has also emerged and evolved as a theme over the course of the papers that make up this thesis. **Paper 2** looks at authenticity from the perspective of language acquisition. Authenticity in language-learning, particularly at university, is often taken to mean an authenticity of text (Little et al, 1988), presenting input that students are likely to encounter in their coming studies (Parks, 2020), but an authenticity of *task* is equally important (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014), i.e. what the students are called upon to actually *do* with these texts, highlighting the importance, from a second-language acquisition standpoint, of moving beyond input to foster learning via tasks that rely on student-output (Long and Crookes, 1992).

Paper 3 represents a first attempt to harness this authenticity of task to distance-learning at university, via the Internet, while the papers that report on the EAST project develop the text/task elements of authenticity, by using telecollaboration to address ‘pluriliteracies’ (Coyle, 2015); not only do the student-interactions (with the texts / with each other) encourage them to outperform their linguistic competence (Ellis, 2008), to develop team-working skills, to work across disciplines (O’Dowd, 2016), and to increase their intercultural awareness (Guth and Helm, 2011), but they call on the students to operate at a level which also challenges *cognitively* (Dalton-Puffer et al, 2014). Coyle (2015: 90) summarises the value of this approach by saying ‘How do I know what I know until I hear what I say?’. As EAST has progressed, a conceptual inter-relationship between this ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’ (Barnett, 2007: 144) has emerged, and this is explored in particular in **KEO 7**.

The adoption of a project-based pluriliteracies approach based on telecollaboration with Gaza also provides a further authenticity, one from a Critical Pedagogies perspective; as Freire puts it (2000: 104), “all authentic education investigates thinking....by stimulating ‘perceptions of

the previous perceptions’ and ‘knowledge of previous knowledge’”. EAST represents an attempt to move away from what Freire (1996: 64) terms a ‘banking’ model of education, one in which learners acquire pre-digested facts that need little or no adaptation to the demands and challenges of the real world; the socially-rooted engineering challenges of EAST add a context that forefronts social justice (Ladegaard and Phipps, 2020), obliging the students to consider their perceptions and their knowledge from novel, and maybe uncomfortable, standpoints. Returning to authenticity of task, and looking specifically at engineers, Canagarajah (2018: 272) avows a combination of text and *context* in making up an effective communicative act, and also stresses the centrality of social networks to this context; the telecollaborative nature of the EAST interactions and the wide range of digital platforms embraced by the students clearly meet this brief and in so doing develop a range of literacies. Furthermore, this is a form of authenticity which can be said to be even more marked (as Fassetta, 2017, points out) for the Gazan participants, whose freedom of movement is so significantly curtailed and whose encounters with the world beyond the Strip are thus already lived, perforce, online.

Barnett’s ‘doing’ and ‘knowing’ are hence addressed with some success by EAST, yet in his opinion (2007: 7) “ways of active ‘knowing’ and as forms of action shot through with first-handed authenticity....offer just two pillars of an educational project”; he posits that true knowing actually involves bringing the student’s *being* into new relationships with the world, i.e. an ontological (as well as epistemological and practical) commitment. I would argue that the data offered in EAST, particularly in the ethnography of **Paper 9** and the extensive student comments in **KEO 7**, suggest that, in listening to one another’s voices, many EAST participants are moving beyond the already-valuable raising of intercultural awareness to find a deeper form of authenticity, what Barnett (2007: 45) terms a “form of student-becoming that is dis-encumbered from its educational setting”. In some cases, this ‘becoming’ can take happily take on an immediately positive form, and there are many comments, particularly in **Papers 8, 9 and 10**, and in **KEO 8**, that can be celebrated, pointing to what Barnett (2007: 72) terms “delight, wonder, care, fun, engagement.” But there are some too suggesting that such ‘engagement’ across cultures can also lead students to lose the comfort of anchors to their own certainties; **KEO 7** offers examples of critical incidents, and relates them to the extensive range of other studies (e.g. Ware and Kramsch [2005]; Mezirow [2011]) that have reported on similar moments of misunderstanding, bewilderment and friction in other intercultural educational projects.

However, there is one final and crucial element of authenticity. Students reach the end of EAST. They have overcome the difficulties of working with peers from other cultures, and have presented what they have learned to an audience of peers and of academics, and in their L2. They survive, and by so doing have had to accommodate to a sense of being lost, i.e. to the knowledge that this sense will occur, then clear, but also perhaps to the understanding that this sense of being lost, and of recovery, is authentic to wider university life (and maybe [Derrida, 2001] to life itself). Many courses, in Barnett's view, aim to educate via 'risk-aversion' (we are reminded again of Freire's idea of a pernicious 'banking' mode of education), but EAST acknowledges the authenticity of taking risks, and as such adds to the 'knowing' and the 'doing' of a pluriliteracies approach what Barnett (2007: 144) terms a "space-for-being", the ontological substrate which is, he feels, crucial to the student's becoming. Given the hardships that the Gazan students are subject to, and the salience of the intended learning outcomes under which the Glasgow-based students are operating (Barnett terms such outcomes as "tantamount to educational totalitarianism" [2007: 71], but are unavoidable on EAST), this is another achievement. Providing some of the students with a sense of university life (and maybe life beyond university) as a 'becoming' is thus a final and important aspect of authenticity. It is one that applies equally to the author, and this is taken up in the following section.

Theme 3: Personal Transformations

In 2018, students from the Islamic University of Gaza were able to study in Glasgow (see **KEOs 3 and 4**), and were of course curious to learn something of the country beyond the confines of academic life. One student was interested in combining British history with the beauty of the open spaces and wilderness that the landscape offers, and I suggested that nowhere could be better than Glencoe to contextualise the (sometimes fraught) relationship between Scotland and England. When I explained what had happened there, she was visibly shocked; to someone who has had to face the possibility of injury and bereavement many times already in her young life, an event that had occurred 300 years ago could have no possible folkloristic or scenic value. This is just one example of how the projects in Eritrea and in Gaza have brought changes to me as a person, and my field notes (see **KEO 7**) outline other moments which similarly drove home an understanding of how the conduct of my research might affect those I researched and, at the same time, the centrality of / need for my

own emotional engagement (Askins, 2009:11; Day, 2012:78), facts that are often neglected within the outcomes-driven ethos of Twenty First Century academia.

The papers comprising this thesis also present a personal evolution in my own understanding of the privilege that my position as a white, western male confers (de Andreotti Oliveira, 2015: 24), and a realisation of how these privileges can more broadly impact my own approach to overseas project-work (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012: 3). This awareness of personal privilege interacts tangibly with the first theme reported above (that of ‘exclusion’). In seeing, for example, the manner in which the teacher-training project in Eritrea defaulted to the training of thirteen (out of thirteen) male trainers (despite the predominance of female teachers), I became aware that, beforehand, I had not even posed this as a likely outcome; as a result, I was keen to foster greater female student-participation in EAST (as **KEO 7** outlines, with only limited success). But the project in Eritrea also highlighted further participatory problems of a widening nature, i.e. my tendency as project manager to impose the overall direction of travel, one which ‘partners’ working across vast power-differentials have little influence over, and this realisation (how can a partner from the Global South ever say ‘no’?) has remained a concern throughout the iterations of EAST (see **paper 10**).

The process of writing this thesis has allowed me to reflect on issues relating to Foucault’s ‘conduct of conduct’, and the extent to which the initiatives described here may be seen (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015: 27) as collusion in processes of neoliberal governance, at best a ‘hacking’ of institutions that are basically beyond reform. **KEO 7** details ways in which the project-work in Eritrea and in Gaza has enabled transformative outcomes for some of the student-participants; many Glasgow-based students express appreciation for the feelings of solidarity with the Global South that pre-sessional project-work can generate, and many from Gaza are grateful for the ‘witnessing’ of their hardships (Freire, 1996) that telecollaborative links to students (from China, from Thailand, from Saudi Arabia...) can provide. However, I also consider a personal transformation, in the emergence of an awareness of my own values and how I myself may stand in relation to the university courses within which I work – the power I have to exclude others, the power the system has to exclude these others and to exclude me, and what I can realistically do to challenge both - to be a fundamental gain resulting from this research.

Given that the first personal transformation is an increase in self-questioning, a second personal impact – an increase in confidence – may seem paradoxical.

In part, this is a pedagogical confidence, a belief in what works, when reflective practice is brought to bear. Twenty years of work, in Eritrea, Glasgow and Gaza, have in a sense only added a ‘pluriliteracies’ rationale to a mode of teaching that already emphasised the centrality of a combination of challenge, motivation and (perhaps above all) output; as Kumaravadivelu (2008: 101) puts it, a need to be “more performative, and less informative”. The experiences outlined here have suggested to me that this is equally true of telecollaborative project-work. The main personal developmental outcome, in pedagogical terms, has been a transformation from a previously-held position of computer-scepticism. Working with partners across geographical and cultural divides, but with clear reasons for collaboration, the computer becomes a necessary tool. By combining groups of students in both sites with similar interests but different strengths in terms of skills, and by including both synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction, there is scope, even for students with apparently restricted English language skills, to gain from online project-work (East, 2012). The ‘information-gap’ becomes massively motivational.

In addition, this gradual growth in confidence also constitutes a conviction that ‘process’ trumps ‘product’. In part, this reflects a learning about the practicalities of project-based education across borders, of the need for patience in constructing collaborative partnerships with overseas partners (Koehn and Obamba, 2014) in order to build trust and to explore mutual needs, and an understanding that benefits between partners must be reciprocal, but are unlikely ever to be identical (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012: 18). In part there is a philosophical element to this confidence, a feeling (born of reflection into EAST) that it is justifiable to begin a project, as Gillian Rose puts it, in ‘the broken middle’, and an understanding that this will involve untidiness and compromise; Phipps (2007:149) relates this specifically to power issues inherent in English language initiatives, stating that

...by demanding the end to all domination and by refusing to associate with the institutions of society and of political power, we try and cover over the mess of life, rather than working together to find ways of living together that will include, even embrace, the impossibilities.

The issue of confidence in ‘process’ also has a final, more definitive, aspect. We have seen that Barnett may take task with the ‘educational totalitarianism’ of learning outcomes yet, even in projects unavoidably straitened (like EAST) by a need to work within pre-existing university systems, the educational process can open up a ‘space-for-being’ not only for the students, but for the educator, in this case myself, too; their ‘becoming’ has also revealed itself as a personal ‘becoming’, my own acceptance of the ubiquity and even the value of uncertainty. Barnett (2007: 77) talks about the student, bewildered for a time by the task she faced, who then “....caught the wind and sailed on”; over the five years’ duration of EAST, even the twenty years of this thesis, I consider this to be very relatable on a personal level and as a reflective practitioner.

Conclusion

An interconnected world will only fulfil its potential if the Global North actively looks to speak to / learn from and with the Global South, and this thesis has argued that there is clear and as yet untapped scope for an expansion of telecollaborative contact, whether quantitative or qualitative, at university level. Though such contacts can facilitate, in occasional instances, opportunities for actual travel, funding will always be uncertain and inadequate, and the contribution of air-travel to global heating, combined with the current Covid-related global lockdown, all point to the need to prioritise online responses. The telecollaborative project-work, as outlined in this thesis, allows under-represented voices from the Global South the chance to be heard within HE, and (in the specific case of Palestine) for people beyond the Gaza Strip to witness the magnitude and injustice of the hardships facing its inhabitants.

However, in truth there are very few outcomes for the Gazan students that can be labelled ‘emancipatory’, and the principal contribution of a project such as EAST thus lies, I feel, in the potential to stimulate debate within the Global North. Since Barnett wrote in 2007, there has if anything been a further move in UK higher education towards the focus on measurable outcomes that he fears. For educators, the social justice lens of a project such as EAST allows a forum in which to critique the underlying power structures of HEIs, and of academia more widely, and to create the space for ‘becoming’ that Barnett advocates. And for Glasgow-based students, the opportunity to travel to the UK and to study on a pre-sessional course may represent the first-ever juxtaposition of content and Global South context in their

lives, bringing an awareness of how the privilege which we (as Scots, Saudis, Chinese....) take for granted are not there for all. Telecollaborative work with the Global South as presented in this thesis may offer students their first opportunity for questioning of a *political* nature or, as Freire (1996: forward) puts it, “to deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” and, by so doing, help to re-centre this brief within higher education as a whole.

References

- Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L. & Brannen, J. 2008. (Eds). *The SAGE handbook of social research methods*, SAGE
- Aouragh, M. 2001. Confined offline: Traversing online Palestinian mobility through the prism of the Internet. *Mobilities*, 6(3), 375-397
- Atkins, K. 2009. ‘That’s just what I do’: Placing emotion in academic activism. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, 4–13
- Barnett, R. 1997. *Higher education: A critical business*. Open University Press: Milton Keynes, UK
- Barnett, R. 2007. *A will to learn: Being a student in an age of uncertainty*. Open University Press: Maidenhead, UK
- Benade, L. 2015. Teachers’ Critical Reflective Practice in the Context of Twenty-first Century Learning, *Open Review of Educational Research*, 2:1, 42-54
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2004. *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL
- Brabazon, H. 2020. The academy’s neoliberal response to COVID-19: Why faculty should be wary and how we can push back, *Academic Matters*, <https://academicmatters.ca/neoliberal-response-to-covid-19/>, accessed 6/6/20
- Bryman, A. 2008. *Social research methods*, OUP: Oxford, UK
- Buendgens-Kosten, J. 2014. Authenticity. *ELT Journal*, 68:4, 457–459
- Burawoy, M. 2009. *The extended case method*, University of California Press: Berkeley, CA
- Canagarajah, S. and Selim, B.S. 2013. Linguistic imperialism. In *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, 388-400. Routledge: London, UK
- Canagarajah, S. 2018. Materialising competence: Perspectives from international STEM scholars. *The Modern Language Journal*, 2, 268-291

- Crosbie, V. 2005. Future Directions for Modern Languages in the Higher Education Landscape: An Interview with Alison Phipps and Mike Gonzalez, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 5:3-4, 294-303
- Day, S. 2012. A reflexive lens: Exploring dilemmas of qualitative methodology through the concept of reflexivity. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 8:1, 60-85
http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/Volume21/QSR_8_1_Day.pdf, accessed 28/06/20
- Dalton-Puffer, C., Llinares, A., Lorenzo, F., & Nikula, T. 2014. You can stand under my umbrella: Immersion, CLIL and bilingual education. A response to Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter. *Applied Linguistics*, 35, 213–218
- Derrida, J. 2001. *Deconstruction engaged: The Sydney seminars*. Power Publications: Sydney, Australia
- Dewey, J. 1910. *How we think*. D C Heath: Lexington, MA
- East, M. 2012. Addressing the intercultural via task-based language teaching: possibility or problem?, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 12:1, 56-73
- Ellis, R. 2008. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* (2nd edition). OUP: Oxford, UK
- Fassetta, G., Imperiale, M.G., Frimberger, K., Attia, M., & Al-Masri, N. 2017. Online Teacher Training in a Context of Forced Immobility: The Case of Gaza, Palestine. *European Education*, 49: 133–150
- Fay, R.J. 2004. *Stories of Emergent Cultures of Distance Learning and Collaboration: Understanding the CELSE-Hellenic Open University Project*, University of Manchester PhD thesis, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing
- Felt, U., Fouché, R., Miller, C.A, Smith-Doerr, L. 2017. (Eds). *The handbook of science and technology studies*, MIT Press: Cambridge, MA
- Foucault, M. 1994. ‘Governmentality’, in Faubion, J. [ed], *Michel Foucault: Power: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin: London, pp 201-222
- Freire, P. 1996. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Penguin: London, UK
- Freire, P. 2000. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, Rowman & Littlefield: Oxford, UK
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Aldine Publishing: Chicago, IL
- Graddol, D. 1997. *The future of English*. British Council: London, UK
- Grant, J., Nelson, G. & Mitchell, T. 2008. Negotiating the Challenges of Participatory Action Research: Relationships, Power, Participation, Change and Credibility. In Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Action Research*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, Ca

- Guilherme, M. 2007. English as a Global Language and Education for Cosmopolitan Citizenship, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 7:1, 72-90
- Guth, S. & Helm, F. 2011. *Developing multiliteracies in ELT through telecollaboration*, Peter Lang: Bern, Switzerland
- Hammond, K. 2012. Lifelong learning in Palestine. *Holy Land Studies*, 11/1, 79-85
- Held, V. 2006. *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. OUP: NY
- Helm, F. 2015. The practices and challenges of telecollaboration in higher education in Europe. *Language Learning and Technology*, 19(2), 197-217
- Honey, J. 1997. *Language is power: The story of standard English and its enemies*. Faber & Faber: London, UK
- Imperiale, M. G. 2017. A capability approach to language education in the Gaza Strip: 'To plant hope in a land of despair'. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 5(1), 37-58
- Koehn, P.H. & Obamba, M.O. 2014. *The transnationally partnered university: Insights from research and sustainable development collaborations in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK
- Kumaravadivelu, B. 2008. *Cultural globalization and language education*, Yale University Press, Newhaven, CT
- Ladegaard, H.J. & Phipps, A. 2020. Intercultural research and social activism, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 20:2, 67-80
- Ledwith, M. & Springett, J. 2010. *Participatory practice: Community-based action for transformative change*, Policy Press: Bristol, UK
- Little, D., Devitt, S. & Singleton, D. 1988. *Authentic Texts in Foreign Language Teaching: Theory and Practice*. Authentik: Dublin, Ireland
- Long, M.H. & Crookes, G. 1992. Three approaches to task-based syllabus design. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26/1: 27-47
- Marie, M., Hannigan, B. & Jones, A. 2018. Social ecology of resilience and 'Sumud' of Palestinians, *Health*, Vol. 22 (1), 20-35
- Mezirow, J. 2011. *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. Wiley: Hoboken, NJ
- Modiano, M. 1999. International English in the global village. *English Today*, 58:15, 14-19
- Morrissey, J. 2015. Regimes of performance: practices of the normalised self in the neoliberal university, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36:4, 614-634

- Nussbaum, M. 2013. *Creating capabilities*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA
- O'Dowd, R. 2016. Emerging Trends and New Directions in Telecollaborative Learning, *Calico*, 33:3
- O'Dowd, R. 2018. *UNicollaboration*, *Journal of Virtual Exchange*, 1, pp 1 – 23
- O'Dowd, R., & O'Rourke, B. 2019. New developments in virtual exchange for foreign language education. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(3), 1–7
- Parks, E. 2020. The separation between language and content in Modern Language degrees: implications for students' development of critical cultural awareness and criticality, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 20:1, 22-36
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2018. Retrieved from pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&itemID=3183. Accessed 6/5/20
- Pennycook, A. 2007. The myth of English as an international language, in Makoni, S. and Pennycook, A. (eds) *Disinventing and reconstituting language*. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, UK
- Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*, OUP: Oxford, UK
- Phipps, A. 2007. *Learning the Arts of Linguistic Survival: Linguaging, Tourism, Life*. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, UK
- Phipps, A. 2014. 'They are bombing now': 'Intercultural Dialogue' in times of conflict. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14:1, 108-124
- Plutino, A., Borthwick, K., & Corradini, E. (eds). 2019. New educational landscapes: innovative perspectives in language learning and technology. *Research-publishing.net*
- Rose, G. 1992. *The broken middle*. Wiley-Blackwell: Hoboken, NJ
- Schön, D. 1983. *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books: New York, NY
- Shor, I., Matusov, E., Marjanovic-Shane, A. & Cresswell, J. 2017. Dialogic & Critical Pedagogies: An Interview with Ira Shor. *Dialogic Pedagogy*, 5. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1147791.pdf> Accessed 2/3/2020
- Starke-Meyerring, D. & Wilson, M. 2008. *Designing globally networked learning environments*, Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands
- UK Council for International Student Affairs. 2018. <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Research--Policy/Statistics/International-student-statistics-UK-higher-education>. Accessed 2/3/20
- van der Wende, M. 2017. Reframing Global Engagement. *International Higher Education*, 90, 10-12

Ware, P.D. & Kramsch, C. 2005. Toward an Intercultural Stance: Teaching German and English through Telecollaboration, *Modern Language Journal*, 89:2, 190-205

Weinstein, M., Blades, D. & Gleason, S.C. 2016. Questioning Power: Deframing the STEM Discourse, *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*, 16:2, 201-212

Willis, J.W. & Edwards, I.C. 2014. (Eds) *Action research: Models, methods and examples*, IAP: Charlotte, NC.

Wright Mills, C. 1959. *The sociological imagination*, Penguin: Harmondsworth, UK

Published papers (presented in chronological order)

Paper 1:

Innovation management issues raised by a distance-learning project in Eritrea: can such projects be successfully transplanted from one developing country to another?

Abstract

This paper, using field work carried out in Eritrea, will examine ways of promoting 'ownership' resulting from the adaptation of a project originally developed outside the host country. The author will argue that while project organisers will probably encounter basic problems concerning local competence, the stress must, above all, fall on an awareness of what Holliday has termed 'intercompetence', "an intermediate stage in behavioural competence which occurs during confrontation with a new culture" (Holliday, 1994: p. 223). The author believes that more effort should be dedicated to ways of adapting ELT material produced in one developing country in order to enable use in another. Just as there are situations in which context-specificity and differing needs clearly preclude adaptation and transplantation within the developing world, so are there cases in which context and needs resemble one another to an extent suggesting that adaptation may be worthwhile. In countries which lack the resources to fund improvements in teacher training and/or the trainer expertise required to provide such development, the use of materials already existing elsewhere provides a low-cost alternative, and one able to offset local skills-shortfalls.

Background

This paper is based on a case-study of Let's Speak English (produced in 1992 by the BBC, International Extension College and the Namibian Ministry of Education), an audio-tape/book based package designed to improve, via distance-mode, the English of Namibian elementary teachers of English, and adapted in 1994/95 for use in Eritrea. It examines this adaptation from the viewpoint of the expatriate curriculum developer alone, largely neglecting the views of the local colleagues involved, and therefore presents an incomplete

picture of the overall project. Though this does represent a weakness of the paper, it is hoped that others involved in innovation management may find the author's experience in Eritrea interesting, particularly in view of the paucity of similar studies.

The initial decision to choose Let's Speak English for adaptation was taken on the following grounds:

1. Clear historic/cultural similarities between Namibia and Eritrea suggested that work produced in the former might be adapted for use in the latter; both countries are poor, both have recently emerged from lengthy periods of war and linguistic domination by foreign powers, and perhaps most importantly, the governments in both cases were willing to embrace radical change. The search for materials to be adapted should thus begin with finding a country at least superficially resembling that in which the intervention is to be made.
2. Extremely poor communications, coupled with acute teacher shortage, meant that teachers could not be given time off to attend a training course. The course therefore needed to adopt a distance-learning approach to enable in-service training at weekends. Let's Speak English, originally produced for book and radio in Namibia, could be adapted for book and audio-tape in Eritrea.
3. Most specifically, teachers' language needs were very similar. They varied widely around a lower-intermediate average and, in part as a result of this weakness, traditional methodology had centred on form rather than appropriateness, accuracy rather than fluency, exercises on language for the sake of exercise rather than the achievement of a communicative task, and teacher-centredness. Let's Speak English aimed to improve teachers' speaking and comprehension skills, and followed a topic-based syllabus linked to likely teacher interests rather than one based on structure, as had been the case in Eritrea for decades.

Adaptation for Eritrea

The cost of buying the rights to and adapting the original, and carrying out a pilot project, was met by a grant of £9,000 from the British Embassy in Addis Abeba. The task of performing the adaptation and training the group leaders who would teach the course fell

largely to the author. The ideal situation, that of working in tandem with the local trainers at the teacher training college proved impossible due to work commitments of their Head of Distance Learning, and seeming diffidence of the Head Trainer appointed to work on the course, who appeared to regard the new course as an implied criticism of past methods (further exploration of this second point will follow). The tasks of administration, of choosing the group tutors who would be trained to use the materials, of choosing those who would participate on the course, and of maintaining all links between the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) and the study centres, fell to the Head Supervisor of the educational district in which the pilot took place and his colleagues.

The training course

Thirteen group tutors attended a week's training course in late September 1994, the aim of which was fourfold:

1. The objectives of the course were laid out, with stress given to its nature as a pilot, i.e. to the important contribution to be offered by the group leaders via summative feedback. At the same time, a framework of in-course evaluation by means of random visits to study centres was explained.
2. Course units were trialled, first by the author and subsequently by peer teaching among the group leaders themselves.
3. Materials were distributed; coursebooks, cassettes, cassette-players, solar panels, batteries.
4. Opinions regarding likely areas of difficulty were solicited. These ranged from the clearly fundamental (the impossibility of teachers to attend once a month on payday), to the seemingly trivial (the absence of places in which to charge batteries safe from goats or thieves, the need to hire glasses for the teabreak), but all were addressed.

The pilot

The pilot itself took place from October 1994 to June 1995, with a parallel pilot conducted by five English teachers working with Voluntary Service Overseas. Their involvement was welcomed for three reasons:

1. They would provide feedback from people external to the project, but informed, in that they had all been working in Eritrea for over a year; one perceived danger regarding the comments of local group leaders was that they might well have been positively biased, for reasons we shall look at later.
2. They would provide feedback from lowland, largely Muslim areas, in which certain topics might be expected to be particularly controversial.
3. They would not require compulsory attendance.

Evaluation

Positive: 12 of the 13 courses were completed, but questionnaires for all 13 filled in by the group leaders. These, combined with impressions gained during visits to schools, suggested that the course had been considered useful by the majority of participants and that clear gains in speaking/comprehension skills had been achieved. A soap-opera style drama, Natsenet School, had been particularly well-received, including the potentially controversial units (even in the lowland regions); stimulating discussion had resulted, though it tended to be student-group leader rather than student-student, a reflection of traditional dynamics in the Eritrean classroom. Finally, there was an unquantifiable but undeniable motivational impact; many teachers had received their first ever training via the course, and even those who had already received teacher training seemed on the whole stimulated, whether directly by the material or simply by having some attention conferred upon them (teaching in Eritrea being a low-status occupation).

Negative: Above all, group leaders lamented poor audio quality, a result of low-quality cassette-players and therefore remediable. The frequent comment that workload was unequal to compensation was similarly remediable; in one study centre the group leader had, after the first eight lessons, alternated leading the lessons with volunteers from among the participants, an excellent innovation for all concerned. Much more fundamental was the travelling distance expected of some participants (round trips of 15 kilometres on foot were not uncommon) and the fact that of the five VSO-led courses, none was completed. This suggested, at best, that the group leaders had been successfully motivated by the training

workshop and that the benefit of a course to participants can only become clear once a certain momentum has been built up through compulsory attendance; at worst, it suggested that participants were attending because they had to, and that the motivation behind the group leaders' comments (a culture-linked anxiety to appear positive, a more prosaic desire to safeguard their compensation) was suspect.

The basic problems likely to be encountered during the piloting of a course of this nature might be loosely divided into two interrelated groups, only some of which had been successfully predicted by the author:

1. Those involving issues of "ownership", particularly those inherent in the adaptation of material produced in one place in order to permit use in another.
2. Those involving issues of "competence", comprising the availability of local personnel at all levels both capable of implementing the project and willing to innovate, and the project organiser's competence, i.e. his/her awareness of the affective issues likely in any donor-host relationship, particularly one across cultures, and resulting ability to present innovation in a non-threatening way.

Ownership

What had been attempted in order to mitigate the negative effects on ownership, at both user level (the course participants and the group leaders) and provider level (the Heads within the Ministry of Education, the educational supervisors administering the course, and the teacher trainers at the college), resulting from the choice taken to adapt work originating from outside the host country?

At user level. As has already been mentioned, the original course chosen was already fairly compatible with the needs of the Eritrean elementary teachers of English. The coursebooks were re-formulated wherever necessary; all names and references to places were Eritreanised, drawings were altered, and at a deeper level any pronunciation points and in some cases entire units peculiar to Namibia were completely re-written. The 16-hour parallel cassette course was re-scripted where necessary and re-recorded in its entirety, using Eritreans (whose English pronunciation of course differs markedly from that found in Namibia). The author

realised from the outset that limited resources in fact precluded any large-scale post-pilot alterations, but the creation (and clear prior signposting) of the feedback network mentioned in the previous section on adaptation for Eritrea was considered nonetheless a valid means of fostering ownership of the course. Furthermore, any subsequent developments of the course could draw on the data gathered, should further funding become available in the future. Results of this feedback, as has already been mentioned, show the course to have been well-received at user level.

At provider level. Here, the necessary co-operation of those with executive powers within the Ministry of Education was ensured from the start of the project, with particular reference to the Director of the training college and his immediate superior, the Head of Vocational Training. This attention to the important "top-down" dynamics within a project was significant not only per se, but also for the effect it would have at lower levels in the educational hierarchy: "Appropriate use of power from those who have the right to use it is essential for the maintenance of an innovation. It is not sufficient but it is necessary" (Kennedy, 1988: p. 335). Acute financial shortages, coupled with the self-help ethos of the Eritrean government and the understandable worry at creating a precedent, meant that offering financial incentives to the local teacher trainers and administrators who were to work alongside the author on the pilot course was vetoed by the Ministry of Education. Sufficient incentive was hoped to stem from the equation of ownership with the national good. This, as we shall see, was actually to occur among the supervisors but not the teacher trainers, though both had already full workloads to cope with. Why might this have been the case?

First, success in administrative terms was probably due to the adoption of some of the supervisors' suggestions concerning project organisation, despite their representing a considerable compromise to the original project brief:

Regarding payments, they insisted that participants travelling long distances should be given expenses linked to the length of journey, and that group leaders had to be compensated for the very considerable extra work entailed. Their recommendations were only accepted after much opposition from the Ministry itself, for financial reasons already outlined above.

Concerning the choice of group leaders, the supervisors insisted on the inadvisability of aiming at a rough male/female balance. In Eritrea, women do much of the teaching, but

virtually none of the training or administration, and a goal, supported by government policy, had been the heavy involvement of female group leaders within the project. The supervisors said that none possessed the English skills necessary. While it can certainly be argued that the ultimate absence of any women among the 13 group leaders can scarcely be termed a positive development, it must be stressed that a project such as this is one of considerable complexity, with gains in one area (in this case the supervisors' sense of ownership) only achievable at the price of losses in others.

In short, the author's acknowledgement of the necessity for local administrative expertise created a vacuum into which the supervisors felt happy to step, with highly beneficial effects on the project.

Reasons for the failure to similarly motivate the teacher trainers were more complex:

1. The most basic reason is that, in a project such as this "borrowed" from abroad, it is clearly easier to foster administrative ownership (where all kinds of innovative input is not merely possible, but desirable) than trainer ownership (where methodology is largely dictated by the coursebook, and changes to the coursebook limited by funding constraints).
2. In a more general sense, much of Holliday's discussion (1994: p. 228) of the clash between "collectionist" and "integrationist" professional cultures is of relevance. The former, he says, is "subject-oriented, hierarchical, appreciative of formal qualification", and this describes fairly closely the Head Trainer appointed to the course. The latter is "skills-based, task-based, participatory, process-oriented, problem solving, consultative", which in turn describes the author's (at least intended) approach. Given the collectionist culture at the college, and the financial aspects constraining any significant "participatory, process-oriented, problem-solving (etc.)" solution, perhaps a compromise might have been sought, more in tune with accepted teaching styles and therefore less traumatic to the trainers involved?
3. The previous paragraph suggests that in the setting up of any ELT project abroad, it is common for a dichotomy to develop, dividing the aims and expectations of hosts and donors. However, in Eritrea the additional need to look for common ground between the integrationist professional culture built up within the Eritrean People's Liberation Front during thirty years' struggle for independence, and the collectionist culture at (for example)

the training college, not liberated until the end of the war and therefore a time-capsule of tradition little touched by innovation throughout that period, suggests a possible trichotomy of interests, with cross-cultural/motivational implications of even greater complexity. While I doubt that situations quite as convoluted as this are common, those going to work in the developing world ought always to be aware that it is not always enough to find that elusive balance between educational and cultural issues; what one might term political issues must also be addressed.

Competence

I mentioned before that project success might be dependent upon two interrelated issues, those concerning "ownership", already discussed, and those concerning "competence", and it is at this point that the dividing line becomes blurred. To what extent is the ownership achieved dependent on the interplay between the ability of local personnel and their willingness to adopt innovation (host competence), and second to what extent is it based on the ability of the expatriate both to reach an understanding of how these two factors interrelate and to influence them in a positive sense where necessary (donor competence)?

Host competence. It has to be conceded here that the author's definition of "host competence" is a restricted one, concerning ability and willingness to contribute to this particular project, and neglecting all other areas in which the local worker may be extremely able and which he/she may, for valid reasons, wish to prioritise. However, if such a narrow definition of host competence can be accepted for the purposes of this paper, the assumption at an early stage that the Head Trainer appointed was unable to accept a need for radical innovation created a real problem, as this person's role was clearly pivotal to the provision of teacher training in English. If someone within an educational structure is considered important, to the success of the project but appears unable to contribute to it, there are several apparent options, none of which is without inherent dangers:

1. Point out the shortcomings of the person in question to his/her superior. The expatriate, aware that such criticism might well result in someone losing their livelihood, may be understandably reluctant to adopt such a course of action. In Eritrea, this highlighted an interesting paradox; my outsider status initially enabled the project, allowing me to take risks that Eritreans pursuing a career within the Ministry might have preferred to avoid (such as

arguing the case for participant compensation with their superiors). Ultimately, however, this status constrained it because there were limits to how far I was prepared to go in order to improve the Eritrean educational system. In fact Becker (1969: p. 270) notes that there is a natural tendency for project workers to repress "conflict-provoking findings", especially as criticism of anyone of course implies criticism of those further up the educational hierarchy, particularly their immediate superior, for failing to identify the problem in the first place.

2. Change the content of the course in order to enlist the support of the trainer. If this entails any but the most restricted dilution of the course aims, it will of course be self-defeating; no innovation will result.

3. Replace the person in question with a local (i.e. Eritrean) colleague. This would be the obvious solution in the developed world, but is more often than not unavailable as an option within a country such as Eritrea, hamstrung by an acute shortage of skilled personnel. The Head of Distance Learning, though highly capable, was unavailable for any extra work commitments.

4. By-pass the problem area, the expatriate taking over his role. While tempting in the short-term, it too is ultimately self-defeating in that it creates what Handy (in Leach, 1991: p. 170) terms "role-underload", "the most insidious, but most ignored, perverter of organisational efficiency"; wherever this occurs, a decreased sense of ownership will be engendered among the local staff, with the risk that the project will thus in all likelihood end on the expatriate's departure.

Donor competence. This brings us directly to the second facet of competence; though perceived issues of local competence may exist, the ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of a project such as the adaptation and piloting of Let's Speak English depends on the solution arrived at by the expatriate, or so I believed while working at the training college. A closer examination of the project in Eritrea may show why I now believe that a project must develop in such a way as to divide ultimate responsibility for its success between donor and host via a meaningful delegation of authority.

In Eritrea I chose the fourth option listed in the previous section, by-passing the Head Trainer, and working as a link between two groups that I knew to be capable, i.e. the

administrators in the higher levels of the Ministry of Education, and the school directors who would be the group leaders. I thus achieved a great deal of what might be termed "quantifiable product", but without having worked through the system at all levels it was therefore unlikely to survive my departure. Worse, not only might I leave the system unchanged, I risked leaving the appointed Head Trainer feeling resentment at "my" project.

I can now see that, even had my diagnosis of this person's abilities been correct, my chosen course of action was probably flawed. But hindsight now suggests that perhaps I erred to an even greater extent; what if the Head Trainer appointed had in fact been capable of change, but not willing? Let us look at these two possibilities in turn.

Scenario 1: If we assume that my diagnosis of the competence of local personnel was in fact correct, and that the Head Trainer on the course was incapable (rather than unwilling) of fostering change within the teacher training system, then even on this basis, the procedure taken was flawed. My reluctance to dilute project content or to insist on the dismissal of the Head Trainer from this role did not in fact leave as the only conceivable solution the one actually adopted, i.e. the assumption of the trainer's role myself. Rather, I should have attempted the more complex task of promoting a teacher from within the system (one who accepted the need for innovation), without upsetting the hierarchy within the role-based system at the college (a variation of (3) in Host competence). Identifying potential trainers was of no great difficulty; there were younger members of staff eager to look at new methods. The crucial factor would have involved identifying and creating a role and tasks not only that the original trainer could have filled, but that would have also been of sufficient importance to ensure no loss of status. Such tasks might have embraced:

(a) The original "Eritreanisation" of the course material, or, given the financial constraints under which the project operated, at least ideas for ways in which the methodology might have been altered to better suit Eritrea.

(b) Liaison between TTI and the supervisors and/or monitoring trips to the schools involved once the course had begun.

There is no doubt that either such proposition would have been one of extreme delicacy in the field, requiring considerable investments of time and energy on the part of the author.

However, the author's inability to delegate required a notable investment of time and energy in any case. Moreover, the fact that the course lost momentum on my departure suggests that the time and energy had been invested in the wrong places. A cost/benefit analysis regarding the value of delegation can thus produce very different results, depending on whether it is undertaken in the heat of the project itself, when shortcuts can prove irresistible, or with the value of hindsight, when the wider view is available.

Scenario 2: If we assume that my diagnosis of the competence of local personnel was incorrect, and that the Head Trainer appointed was in fact capable of change, then the course of action chosen was flawed to an even greater extent, in that it wasted resources at a premium in the developing world. Again, looking back on the project, I now suspect that my whole diagnosis regarding the ability of the Head Trainer to innovate came too readily, insufficiently substantiated by actual events, and motivated by my desire, already mentioned, for "quantifiable product". In this case, project success could have been enhanced not (once again) by taking on too many mantles myself, but by correctly addressing the question of incentives. We have already looked at the importance of "top-down" pressure. However, the will to perform well before peers may be an equally potent incentive, as may a simple appeal to altruism, or (if as in Eritrea funding is not forthcoming) time off in lieu. In Eritrea, a combination in some form of all of these factors might have been attempted, but above all particular attention ought to have been paid to the vital importance of apportioning responsibility via delegation, already mentioned in the previous paragraph. Delegation will, at least, enhance ownership of a project and hence willingness to work towards its success; at most, it may even promote the development of the general competence (i.e. beyond the limited needs of the project in hand) which ought at root to be the inherent aim of all ELT projects in the developing world.

Conclusion

While it is clear that it takes two to create a situation of anomalous behaviour between cultures, i.e. one of "intercompetence", it is only the intruder who needs to justify him/herself. The experience of adapting Let's Speak English for Eritrea has made clear the strength of the threat posed to local educationalists by innovation, in my opinion one of the greatest problems facing ELT project organisers in the developing world. First, it is natural to underestimate its impact amid the myriad difficulties of organising an ELT

project abroad. Second, once the relationship between expatriate and local staff has been compromised, it is very difficult to regain lost ground (and this problem is clearly even less tractable if the expatriate is promoting, as in this case, course material originating from outside the host country). The dedication of time and energy to ensuring positive first impressions on local staff, and the display of humility and patience by the expatriate, are quite vital. Third, and most importantly, intercompetence can falsify the very ground upon which project evaluation is to take place in that, unless the expatriate can be utterly sure of having explored every avenue likely to foster acceptance within the host body, he/ she will never be able to ascribe any ultimate failure, as occurred in Eritrea, to lack of host ability rather than lack of *willingness*.

On the other hand, however, the experience of adapting Let's Speak English for use in Eritrea has not invalidated the thesis favouring project exchange between developing nations. The course was considered beneficial by its users, and after further adaptation by VSO volunteers has been adopted in part by the Eritrean Ministry of Education (who are making use of the soap opera to improve listening and speaking skills among secondary school pupils), and it may be used again in the future for teacher training should funding become available. Gains which might be seen as having only marginal significance in the developed world cannot be judged with such rigour in a country such as Eritrea, where all progress is made in the face of far greater difficulty; as Phillipson puts it (1992: p. 16), "implementing educational innovation is an immensely complex undertaking, which presupposes control of a substantial number of variables". With a higher awareness of issues of innovation management, I am convinced that project exchange of this nature represents a low-cost answer to skills/subject shortfalls; in an imperfect world, an option worthy of further exploration.

References

- Becker, H. S. (1969) Problems in the publication of field studies. In *Issues in Participant Observation*, eds G. J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, pp. 260-275. Reading, Massachusetts.
- Holliday, A. (1994) *Appropriate Methodology and Social Context*. CUP, Cambridge.
- Kennedy, C. (1988) Evaluation of the management of change in ELT projects. *Applied Linguistics* 9(4), 329-342.
- Leach, F. (1991) Perception gaps in technical assistance projects: the Sudanese case. In *Educational Innovation in Developing Countries*, eds K. M. Lewin and J. S. Stuart, pp. 159-178. Macmillan.

- Phillipson, R. (1992) ELT: the native speaker's burden? *ELTJournal* 46(1), 12-17.

Paper 2:

Task and Text Authenticity in the EFL classroom

Abstract

There is now a general consensus in language teaching that the use of authentic materials in the classroom is beneficial to the learning process. However, on the question of when authentic materials can be introduced into the classroom there is less agreement. In addition, the notion of authenticity has largely been restricted to discussions about texts; there have been few systematic attempts to address the question of task authenticity. In the paper that follows, the authors endeavour to address both of these issues.

Authentic texts

An authentic text is one 'created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced' (Little *et al.* 1988: 27). With the onset of the communicative movement a greater awareness of the need to develop students' skills for the real world has meant that teachers endeavour to simulate this world in the classroom. One way of doing this has been to use authentic materials as defined by Little *et al.* above, in the expectation that exposing students to the language of the real world will help them acquire an effective receptive competence in the target language. In other words, the use of authentic texts, embracing both the written and spoken word, is helping to bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and 'a student's capacity to participate in real world events' (Wilkins, 1976: 79).

Alongside this recognition of the need to develop effective skills and strategies for the real world, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of affective factors in learning, and the use of authentic texts is now considered to be one way of maintaining or increasing students' motivation for learning. They give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the 'real' language; that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it.

As an illustration of the change over the past 15 years, listening materials of extremely high quality are now available. Writing in 1981, Porter and Roberts (p. 37) lamented that clearly-enunciated RP exchanges with distinct turns and uniform pace were the norm, whereas now texts such as the *Cambridge Skills for Fluency: Listening* series published by Cambridge

(1998) show what can be done, offering elided, fragmented, less formal, genuine English, and well-recorded to boot. The fact that this welcome situation is coming about (and that the examination boards might take note of it) is largely in response to the importance of skills-development and motivational issues, as outlined above. The question now, it seems, is not whether authentic texts should be used, but when and how they should be introduced.

Authenticity and text difficulty

At post-intermediate level an ever-widening range of authentic material has become available for use in the classroom. It is generally possible to select texts that will stretch the learner in terms both of skills development and of the quantity and range of new language. And, of course, most texts are selected with this dual purpose in mind.

At lower levels, however, even with quite simple tasks, unless they have been very carefully selected for lexical and syntactic simplicity and/or content familiarity/predictability, the use of authentic texts may not only prevent the learners from responding in meaningful ways but can also lead them to feel frustrated, confused, and, more importantly, demotivated. And this would seem to undermine one of the main reasons for using authentic texts in the first place.

So can authentic material be simplified without losing its authenticity? Widdowson (1978) believes that simplification can take place, within the conventions of a given language field, while maintaining authenticity in the sense of learner response. To do this, the text has to 'engage the learner's interest and impress him as being in some way relevant to his concerns' (ibid: 90). At lower levels, therefore, as long as this can be achieved, the genuine/specially-prepared dichotomy is perhaps irrelevant. Simplification is fine. Materials do not have to be given an artificial 'genuine-look' in order to be accepted by the learner. What matters more is that they should be well-executed. As Lynch (1996: 15) puts it, 'simplification – that is *successful* simplification – contributes both to the current communicative even and to longer-term language development'. The suspicion remains, however, that many textbook writers make recourse to simplification with a haste that is often undignified. The resulting texts are patently not 'well-executed'. In writing, technical and sub-technical words are excised (and with them any clues to context); in listening, texts lose their redundant features and are shortened (and hence lose the repetitions upon which L2 learners so depend), or the co-ordination of natural speech gives way to subordination, in the name of efficiency. While

simplification of text, especially for lower levels, is justified, it appears to be difficult to execute seamlessly.

An alternative

An alternative approach to the problem does exist. We have already seen how real text can help ‘bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world. A corollary of this has been that partial comprehension of texts is no longer considered to be necessarily problematic, since this is something which occurs in real life. As long as students are developing effective compensatory strategies for extracting the information they need from difficult authentic texts, total understanding is not generally held to be important; rather, the emphasis has been to encourage students to make the most of their partial comprehension.

A well-known example of such a kind of listening is Porter and Roberts’ distorted railway station message, from which students have to predict and then extract specific information (1981: 44). Asking students to work in a similar fashion, Windeatt (1981), cited in Anderson and Lynch (1988: 88) explains how the same listening text can be used with six different learner levels. In developing these strategic competencies, texts do not, therefore, need to be simplified; it is what learners are expected to do with the texts that has to be controlled.

Nevertheless, whilst some texts lend themselves to this kind of competence training, few teachers would agree that all textual input should only be exploited in this way. For one thing, we should be aware that it offers reduced opportunities for introducing learners to the use of non-authentic task, with the concomitant loss of authenticity of learner response. When in real life, for example, do people listen to the news with the purpose of noting down how many items are covered? (this is one of Windeatt’s tasks). It is to this issue of task authenticity, specifically as it relates to productive tasks, that we will now turn.

The importance of task

‘Control over linguistic knowledge is achieved by means of performing under *real operating conditions* in meaning-focused language activities’ (our italics).
(Ellis 1990: 195)

Taking the Ellis quote above, we might posit that ‘authenticity’ lies not only in the ‘genuineness’ of text, but has much to do with the notion of task. In fact, there is growing evidence that whilst input is necessary for the development of proficiency in the target language, by itself it is not sufficient. A degree of instruction or focus on form (Long, 1991), together with learner production, are now generally considered important for classroom-based second language development. Pedagogic tasks provide a means of giving learners opportunities for production (Swain, 1985) and opportunities to draw attention to aspects of form in the target language (Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1998). If this is the case, it might be useful to consider whether the notion of authenticity can be applied to pedagogic tasks, as we have already applied it to pedagogic texts, in any useful way.

The issue of task authenticity is in fact far more complex than Ellis’s rather vague reference to ‘real operating conditions’ and so it might be possible to identify four broad schools of thought regarding task-authenticity.

1 – Authenticity through a genuine purpose

One of the crucial aspects of task authenticity is whether real communication takes place; whether the language has been used for a genuine purpose. Willis (1996) is keen to distinguish these kinds of activities, which she calls tasks, from activities where the language learners are simply producing language forms correctly. Grammar exercises, drills, and practice activities in which the emphasis is on a particular linguistic form, are all examples of the latter. In tasks, on the other hand, the emphasis should primarily be on meaning and communication, and this is something which replicates the process of communication in the real world. In this kind of interaction Willis (1996: 18) argues, students have the chance to interact naturally, in ‘real time’, to achieve a particular communicative goal, which will be ‘far more likely to lead to increase fluency and natural acquisition’ than controlled exercises that ‘encourage learners to get it right from the beginning’.

2 – Authenticity through real world targets

Working within a needs-analysis framework, Long and Crookes (1992) argue that pedagogic tasks must relate to ‘real world’ target tasks. Examples that they give are: buying a train ticket, renting an apartment, reporting a chemistry experiment, taking lecture notes, and so forth. The target tasks are identified following a needs analysis of the tasks which the

learners are preparing to undertake. The classroom-based pedagogic tasks are not the same as the target tasks, but ‘complex approximation of them’ (ibid: 44). From this perspective, a task might be said to be authentic if it has a clear relationship with real world needs. At this point we should remind ourselves that the identification of needs is not necessarily simple; Fanselow (1982: 180) shows that caution is required, citing the case of a Chinese chef who has been taught to describe his work as he goes about it. At first sight, since this field has been identified correctly, this might seem to satisfy Long and Crookes’ definition of authenticity, but does it really do so? Does a Chinese chef need to be able to say ‘I am slicing the onions’? S/he might well be better off learning how to take a telephone order, or to check figures on an invoice. And if authenticity in terms of content is elusive in ESP, how much more so on a general English course?

3 – Authenticity through classroom interaction

Rather than focusing on real world situations outside the learning situation, Breen (1985) argues that the most authentic activities exploit the potential authenticity of the learning situation: ‘Perhaps one of the main authentic activities within a language classroom is communication about how best to communicate’ (ibid: 67). Breen argues that all of the everyday procedures, the learning tasks, types of data, and the materials to be selected and worked on, the actual needs interest and preferred ways of working of all the people gathered in the classroom, all provide ‘sufficient authentic potential for communication’ (Breen 1985, 67). So for Breen, it is important that the choice and sequence of tasks are negotiated, and it is this very process of negotiation which is authentic. One of the examples he gives is of students working in pairs and groups, and discussing, evaluating and reporting on the usefulness and appropriateness of teacher feedback and different kinds of homework tasks.

4 – Authenticity through engagement

Finally, mirroring Widdowson’s concern with learner response to text, authenticity of task might be said to depend on whether or not a student is ‘engaged’ by the task. Just as ‘genuine’ materials may seem inauthentic to certain groups of learners, so tasks which are authentic by any of the above criteria can appear inauthentic to certain learners. Ultimately, this is probably the most crucial type of authenticity, for unless a learner is somehow ‘engaged’ by the task, unless they are genuinely interested in its topic and its purpose, and understand its relevance, then the other types of authenticity may count for very little. It also

has important implications for the presentation and selection of tasks. It may be possible, for example, to ‘authenticate’ a task to learners through careful explanation of its rationale. Further, echoing Breen’s concern that the learning should be the product of negotiation, it suggests that students should be given a role in task selection.

At first, the four types of task authenticity presented above might not seem to have much in common. Long and Crookes’ concern that pedagogic tasks must relate to target tasks appears to be at odds with Breen’s notion of achieving authenticity by exploiting the communicative potential of the immediate learning situation. And, while Breen sees negotiation of the learning process as an authentic task, this may appear inauthentic to certain types of learner. Nevertheless, as a guiding principle, we think that each of the four notions described above, has much to offer the practising teacher and/or materials designer, and of course, ultimately, the students. Furthermore, while all four may not form a coherent whole, teachers can, in appropriate circumstances, devise learning situations in which the four can operate in conjunction. For example, a class might negotiate a series of communicative learning tasks which all, in some way, approximate real world target tasks. This could then be followed by a post -task discussion of the value/usefulness of each activity.

Authenticity and task difficulty

Let us now consider whether task authenticity need be compromised when we are working with low level students. Careful consideration of the elements comprising task difficulty (which Skehan [1998] has usefully identified as complexity of the language, cognitive load, and performance conditions) should lead to selection of tasks in accordance with students’ ability, but tasks which are relatively simple need not be deemed any less authentic than more difficult tasks. Willis (1996), for example, is a useful source of genuinely communicative activities which can be used with beginners and young learners. Many of these activities are games, or have a game quality about them, for example, such as playing bingo, remembering items from a picture, playing verbal hide and seek, finding the odd word out of a series. Others involve obtaining real information by conducting simple surveys in the class, for example, such as making a list of class telephone numbers, finding out what makes of car the other students have, or about members of their families. If approximation to real world target tasks is our concern, then many examples of authentic but simple tasks come to mind, including one of the examples already mentioned by Long and Crookes: buying a train ticket.

We could add, for instance, ordering a coffee, booking a hotel room, or asking the way. Breen's call for teachers to devise tasks which exploit the 'communicative potential of the classroom' might seem too ambitious for low-level students who cannot be expected to engage in complex discussions and negotiation about the learning situation. But, even at very low levels, there is still some scope for genuine student input into the teaching-learning process. For example, low-level students may make useful contributions to course evaluation through the use of simple questionnaires and class surveys. Such methods become useful for taking into account students' perceptions of task usefulness and future relevance, which we identified earlier as the fourth kind of authenticity. And surely this is something that most of us would agree can and should operate at all levels of student proficiency?

The above discussion suggest that considerations of authenticity bear little relation to their degree of difficulty. Very simple pedagogic tasks used with low-level students can still be described as authentic.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that the authenticity of text (genuineness) may need to be sacrificed if we are to achieve authentic responses in our students. Although examples were given of how certain real texts can be used with very low learners, a strong case was also made for the well-executed simplification of texts. In contrast, we have seen how many very simple tasks can be devised which exhibit a high degree of authenticity, not only in terms of task, but also in terms of learner response.

We expect that many readers will already have realised that the separation between text and task maintained thus far is a rather artificial one; in the real world, language input and language output usually occur as part of an integrated process of communication. Current practice in language teaching recognises this, and so texts, in addition to introducing new language and developing receptive competence, are generally used as stimuli for tasks. Preliminary tasks, too, can have an important role prior to students' work with a text. To do this, to integrate input and output, reception and production, is to mirror real world communicative processes, and is something that all teachers concerned with moving towards authenticity should aim to do.

References

- Anderson, A. and T. Lynch. 1988. *Listening*. Oxford: OUP
- Breen M.P. 1985. 'Authenticity in the language classroom'. *Applied Linguistics* 6/1: 60-8
- Ellis, R. 1990. *Instructed Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fanselow, J. 1982. *Breaking Rules*. London: Longman
- Little, D. S. Devitt, and D. Singleton. 1988. *Authentic Texts in Foreign Language Teaching: Theory and Practice*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Long, M. H. 1991. 'Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology', in K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, and C. Kramsch (eds): *Foreign Language Research in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Long, M.H. and G. Crookes. 1992. 'Three approaches to task-based syllabus design'. *TESOL Quarterly* 26/1: 27-47
- Lynch, T. 1996. *Communication in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: OUP.
- Porter, D. and J. Roberts. 1981. 'Authentic listening activities'. *ELT Journal* 36/1: 37-49.
- Skehan, P. 1998. *A cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: OUP
- Swain, M. 1985. 'Communicative competence: some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development', in S. Gass and C. Madden (eds.): *Input in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley: Newbury House
- Widdowson, H.G. 1978. *Teaching Language as Communication*. Oxford: OUP.
- Willis, J. 1996. *A Framework for Task-based Learning*. London: Longman.
- Wilkins, D. 1976. *Notional Syllabuses*. Oxford: OUP

Paper 3:

‘How can we reach them?’

Abstract

This case study looks at how language and academic support for both home and overseas students can be integrated into an undergraduate engineering course where teaching is by lab and lecture.

Background

The events described here took place at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. They involved collaboration between the Electronic and Electrical Engineering (EEE) Department and the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Unit on a third-year course of 110 students, half of whom are home students, and half from overseas.

Part 1

Five years ago our EFL Unit was feeling elated. We had been asked to assess third-year undergraduate EEE report-writing, and identify students who needed English language classes. ‘Great!’, we thought. ‘A chance to assist with “writing across the curriculum”.’ However, our jubilation was tempered when we realised that, following the traditional style of the EEE Department, our input for the EEE students was to be a one-hour lecture on report writing in term one. Thankfully, we could give guidance on ‘goals’ by including criteria for assessment, but there was no chance to let students see a model, or to practise the process of writing.

The essence of the mismatch between our own and the EEE Department’s approach was that in our unit the approach was very student-centred. We subscribe to the view that the process of learning to write is cyclical. Students do an assignment, receive feedback and try again next time. This means they are told *what* to do and then receive feedback on *how* they did. To supplement this approach, we have a flexible range of delivery: from formal to informal, personal to electronic.

‘Still,’ we thought, ‘at least with a lecture our work is integrated and it is better than dealing with students on a one to one basis.’ So the lecture went ahead. And when the reports came in we followed up with a thorough assessment programme. This involved six EFL tutors marking 110 scripts and giving individual written feedback. We then set up three levels of support, based on the ‘classical’ distribution of the results: a handout for the top 25 per cent, a handout and three hours of classes for the mid 50 per cent, and 12 hours of classes for the bottom 25 per cent.

There was no doubt about the support that we could expect from the EEE Department. They were right behind us and assisted us where they could. However, the timetabling of classes was a nightmare. We were also very worried about some home students whose first language was not English. In our view, they needed at least 12 hours of language support.

Furthermore, their language problems were different from those of students who had come from overseas. An inharmonious mix was created when home students found themselves in the same class as students from overseas. As is our normal practice, we evaluated the programme at the end of the set of classes. The higher scoring home students showed either that they did not need the help because they knew it already, which was fine, or that it was useful. There was no follow up from either the EEE Department or from the EFL Unit of this or other assignments in terms two and three. The problem was left dangling.

We have repeated the same lecture input and assessment procedure over the last three years. We have not been surprised to learn that the EEE staff still think that there is something wrong with their students’ writing. In discussion with them, it is clear that they think it might be to do with clauses and commas. For a while, we thought that the way to improve the situation would be to hold staff workshops on guiding and assessing student writing, but the department declined our offer. Our suggestion that it might be a good idea to talk to students was also met with a negative response. There seemed to be a belief that the EFL Unit should *tell* the student *what* to do. We had reached a stalemate.

This year, however, heralded a change of direction. The impetus for this came when the EEE external examiner made adverse comments about student communication skills. It resulted in a new course called Career Skills 3, which is a much broader-based communication programme that includes assignments on report writing, CVs, a business letter, and a technical essay. Unfortunately, our input is still the same one-hour lecture. We offered again

to give staff workshops, only to be met with horror. No time! Staff are heavily committed to research.

What were we to do? We could continue to make our ‘token’ effort, but we know that results would be limited. Our commitment was to facilitating learning. How could we respond?

Part 2

An answer came that seemed very obvious once we had thought of it. This was an electronic and electrical engineering department, so what could be more appropriate than utilising the computer and the Web? Here is a mode of delivery that is flexible enough to circumvent lectures, unread handouts, timetabling problems and unhappy class mixes. Fortunately, we were not starting from scratch. We had already produced some online materials for writing humanities essays, called ‘Outlines’. Their broad learning goal was to give a general feel for the genre. They take the student through the general process of working out what a title means and, through links, they guide the student to make use of the instruction words, context and grammar in order to select a suitable pattern of argument for their essay. We offer five types: Listing, Compare and Contrast, Cause and Effect, For and Against, and Situation-Problem-Response-Evaluation. Each argument pattern is linked to a template for creating a logically ordered outline. At each stage there are samples, and for each pattern we have created a model outline and essay. So far, so good. We thought we could adapt these to include EEE essay titles.

But our talks with the EEE students clearly indicated that the mix of students meant that there was a wide range of language problems. Consequently, the ‘Outlines’ materials were pitched too high. They assumed knowledge of academic style and the meta-language of grammar. By contrast, EEE students tend to write as they speak; they have a limited idea of what makes academic discourse special and a relatively rocky grammatical base, which means a patchy understanding of the difference between, for instance, a verb and an adjective.

We talked to EEE staff and realised that there was too much navigational freedom in the existing materials. Having assumed that students had a certain amount of academic baggage, the structure of the materials meant that students could choose the order in which they would

read the pages. Aghast at this, staff in the EEE Department were adamant that their students needed to be presented with the material in a far more predictable way.

So it was back to the drawing board for us. A major rethink was required in terms of content design, especially the simplification of stages in the essay planning process, and expansion of the type of language support to cover academic style conventions as well as basic grammar points. We started by breaking down the process into three basic stages: analysing the title, gathering information, and organising information.

A key change in ‘analysing the title’ was to narrow the learning goal to an approach in which only one essay title was analysed. We called this ‘unpacking’, and added the use of different colours to identify instruction words, key aspects, and significant information. The EEE student needed to view the title in a more basic way as a portal to a fairly prescribed essay template, similar to the process of setting out the design template of an electrical circuit. We were drawing on what they know and understood in order to create a bridge into the writing aspect of their studies.

For ‘gathering information’, we placed the focus on time management, amount of information (complete with a likely word count), and the need to record accurate bibliographical details along the way.

For the final stage in the planning process, ‘organising the information’, our initial idea was to use an authentic and impressive mind-map produced by one of our (more proficient) students, showing the ‘process’ from reading plan through detailed notes, writing plan, first draft, to the final essay. But two problems surfaced here. The first was technical. Scanned pages of the ‘scrawl’ that typifies all brainstorming and notes (whether good or bad!) become virtually illegible on the computer screen. The second problem involved content, because our proficient student was studying education. The EEE students would not be able to adapt this model to their own subject.

Here was another impasse, which was finally solved by the tutor giving us a sample essay called ‘What is the future for electric and hybrid electric vehicles?’ We pounced on the model. There was no lack of essay titles, but we did not possess the content know-how needed to write models, as we had done in the ‘Outline’ materials. For the ‘organising

information' section we created notes extrapolated from the essay and showed the process of harvesting main points, and fitting them into a logically ordered outline.

So much for the planning process. We have said that, in view of the linguistic weaknesses of the EEE students, we aimed to present this in a fairly regimented manner. However, we did allow for an element of flexibility when it came to expanding language support by making a frequently asked question (FAQs) section, catering to students both stronger and weaker than the EEE norm. The FAQs covered academic style conventions as well as basic grammar points. Depending upon their level, students might choose to learn by looking at models, or to use our Web pages as an online grammar resource.

For students wanting to see a model of style and structure, we had only one at our disposal, and we have exploited it thoroughly. From the FAQs page we linked to separate sections to demonstrate introductions, conclusions, citing sources, bibliography, paragraphing, and tense use. In fact, the need to use this one essay as our model throughout has been, perversely, a strength, because it gives the student who lacks confidence a safe point of reference.

For students needing to use the FAQs as an online grammar resource, we set up a choice to suit different problems. A simple problem might be a question of punctuation or sentence structure. For the more ambitious students there was a link to a deeper level, a more sophisticated look at 'writing powerful sentences' and a section on 'how can I give my opinion?' At a more detailed level we still provided links to pages outwith our material, for example a dictionary, detailed grammar site, and exhaustive list of commonly misused words.

As a final safety measure to cover any problems arising, we set up an e-mail box at the foot of the FAQs, so that any student with further questions could contact one of our EFL staff (see 'Writing a Technical Essay' at <http://www.efl.arts.gla.ac.uk/Links.htm#writing>).

Case reporters' discussion

The challenge described in this case was to come up with something that would suit home and overseas students, and could be integrated into the curriculum without impinging unduly on student or staff time. The online solution caters for a mix of levels, and avoids timetabling problems. The response has been positive. From informal discussions with quite a number

of the EEE staff, we know that they like the materials because they are wide-ranging. They deal with a significant number of issues to do with writing, from commas to how to give an opinion. The students like them because they are simple and logical, thus easy to use. We have invited comment from learning support staff in other disciplines. They like the layout and think that the content design is consistent and well thought through. They want to adapt them for use in other subjects.

We think there are several reasons why these online materials work. The first is that the opportunity to meet the students and talk to them gave us a ‘feel’ for our audience. Students cannot always articulate their problems, so there is a fair amount of interpretation involved at this stage. Also, we have taught essay preparation courses for many years in different formats according to need. We know what it means to take students through the ‘how’.

The second is the fact that we were able to get a passable model essay. The EEE course director understood what we were doing and helped to make it work. The third is that we were able to offer a mix of guidance using a ‘process’ approach, models, and access to rules. The EEE students feel comfortable with the prescriptive nature of the process, and the choice of logical argument patterns; it has an affinity with being told a lab procedure. They are being given a template. They know what to say; they want help with the ‘vehicle’ for conveying the message.

‘Aha!’ you might say. ‘What do you do about technical expertise?’ The answer is that you gather it yourself: very slowly. We have developed expertise from teaching with online materials, observing how students learn, and understanding the features of task design in this mode. We have looked at a large number of sites and observed style characteristics to make sure we could maintain user-friendliness. We made the decision to eschew the complexity of interactive tasks because you have to second-guess students’ answers. Instead, we offer reference and personal communication via the e-mail box. This is the nearest we can get to a tutorial.

For technical matters, time is important. The work took about five weeks, including designing, writing and testing the Web pages. It involved two members of staff, of whom one was keen to learn html. We also had access to technical support for the tricky bits. This

was the third set of online materials we had worked on, so we already knew some of the pitfalls, such as poor navigation.

Of course, this online solution does not fully address the problem. Can we reach all of the students who need help? Those who make use of support are usually the bright ones wanted to do better. And let us not forget the cyclical nature of writing development. We have not dealt with the assessment and formative feedback aspects.

The next question is, ‘Does it work for the students?’ They have not handed in their essays yet. Watch this space!

Paper 4:

Investigating EAST (English for Academic Study Tele-collaboration). A UK- Palestine English Language Project for Engineering and Science Graduates

Abstract

How can technology be best-harnessed to innovate pedagogical approaches to curriculum design and delivery in order to enhance university students' learning experience?

This article looks at this question from the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) perspective and reports on a number of technology-enabled interventions to the design and teaching methods used on a Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) pre-sessional course.

Every summer the University of Glasgow (UK) runs an intensive ESP course for incoming international postgraduate students wanting to study SET-related disciplines. In previous years, in order to progress onto their master's or PhD programmes, the students had to produce a written assignment and an oral presentation which investigates an engineering problem of their choosing and a range of solutions.

In August 2015 an online collaboration with a partner university in Palestine was piloted, which allowed several significant developments. During the project, 20 Palestinian students and 37 UK-based students, divided into small groups, worked together on authentic and highly contextualised SET-related scenarios from the Gaza Strip, devised by the Palestinian students. Their role was to act as critical friends, and provide content-oriented comments throughout the project, which they had been trained in on an intensive online preparatory course in constructive feedback. Based on the guidance from their peer mentors, the students in the UK analysed and evaluated possible solutions. At the end of the project, they delivered presentations to the audience in Gaza via a videoconference link.

The course was evaluated highly. In an end-of-project survey, with an 81% rate of completion, the students from both institutions commented on the range of positive outcomes of the participation, for example language practice, development of digital literacies and enhancement of content knowledge. It was felt, though, that there was an imbalance in

benefits and that there is need to revise the course further to offer more opportunities for mentoring input from the Palestinian participants.

This article reports on the project and looks into how the technology-enabled interventions helped improve the course by strengthening the project-based learning elements of the previous course design, focusing on development of transferable skills, and above all bringing in real-world issues into the SET classroom. Working with authentic and specific issues, the UK-based students' output seemed of higher quality in terms of critical analysis or evaluation. The paper discusses a number of related challenges too in order to help any educator interested in introducing tele-collaboration into their curriculum to avoid pitfalls and make more informed decisions.

Introduction

In today's globalised workplace, collaboration across cultures and geographical locations, rapid exchange of information and efficient management of constantly updating knowledge require not only robust IT infrastructure but also a range of digital literacies on the part of employees and employers. The use of communication technology can be found among the four 'mega trends' that Shuman et al.^[1] specifically identify for the field of engineering, alongside changes forced by the fragile world economy, student and professional mobility, and the increasingly loud voice of the social imperative. This poses challenges for educational institutions which, beyond helping students become subject experts, need to take the responsibility for preparing them to 'deal with global communicative practices online, in all their complexity'^[2]. This trend toward developing skills needed to fully operate in highly globalised and cross-cultural settings as a necessary top-up to 'technical core competencies'^[3] has become very clear in engineering education.

Most engineers will emerge from their degree courses needing to interact with fellow-engineers and - an even greater challenge - frequently non-engineers in both online and face-to-face settings. They need to be able to explain in an accessible way how their innovations function, and troubleshoot whenever the communication breaks down. According to Lucena et al.^[4], "[t]oday, engineers throughout the world must take it for granted that they will work in other countries or be employed alongside people who have been trained in other countries". In light of this, there is a growing need for a range of underlying 'meta-

competencies’ in order to ensure employability as well as gain employment opportunities guaranteeing stimulating lifelong career-development opportunities. These benchmarks for success include: “an ability to learn how to learn, an ability to form learning communities, and an ability to collaborate in distributed corporate settings, across countries, continents and cultures”[3].

Universities attempt to capture the demand for the new skillset by revising and extending the existent intended learning outcomes (ILOs) to include references to the meta-competencies. Biggs and Tang[5] note that the most effective ILOs will challenge students to go further than ‘solve’ or ‘explain’, asking instead to ‘apply to professional practice’, ‘hypothesise’, ‘reflect’, even ‘relate to principles’, in short to demonstrate the so-called higher-order thinking skills, with the ultimate aim of developing a thrice-strong student: a scholar; a lifelong-learner, and a global citizen. To embrace this challenge, universities also devise lists of ‘graduate attributes’, which they actively promote among the student population and encourage staff to embed into course designs (e.g. the University of Glasgow ‘Graduate Attributes Matrix’: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/attributes/>).

These newly-identified requirements must in turn impact pre-sessional courses, i.e. language and study skills provision offered to international students prior to their postgraduate study at an overseas university. By definition, teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), for example for engineers and scientists, foregrounds the learners’ specific needs and focuses on context, situational practice, cross-cultural issues, authenticity of communication and materials[6] [7]. For these reasons, informational communication technologies (ICTs) have become very attractive tools in the context of ESP. The technology itself is not a method, and any use of it does not automatically result in improvement in learning or teaching[8]. Rather it is the ways in which it is used, purposefully and thoughtfully, that may lead to learning. The affordances of the so-called Web 2.0 tools are such that they allow networked-based language teaching, moving beyond simple information transfer[9]. They can provide an opportunity to collaborate and engage in authentic communication and an exchange of up-to-date knowledge closely related to the students’ prospective profession, and, by so doing, to become accepted members of the discourse community. The effect on the learner can be empowering[10].

The EAST project, presented and evaluated in this article, is deeply rooted in the recognition of the expectations of engineering graduates, and in the potential ways digital technologies might ‘foster global awareness in classrooms [and] students’ understandings of the interrelationships of peoples worldwide, thereby preparing students to participate meaningfully as global citizens’^[11]. The very name of the project, which stands for English for Academic Study Telecollaboration, aims to acknowledge the facilitation of relationships between people, experiences and knowledge at a distance, through technology. The technology-enabled interventions to the course design discussed in the subsequent sections may rely on technologies that are well-known and already widely-used. However, the article focuses on the innovative practices of the teachers and students in a particular context. By doing so, it attempts to demonstrate that technology integration that is closely aligned with the learners’ needs and well thought-out pedagogical goals may maximise the learning gains for the students. In this particular context, within the framework of a pre-Masters language preparatory course for engineers, introducing networked-based learning allowed the students to develop a range of soft skills, or ‘professional awareness’ skills (as Shuman et al.^[1] prefer to call them), increasingly accepted as key to the growth of the rounded engineer, noted above, with the more traditional ‘hard’ skills necessitating the development and enhancement of a considerable range of digital literacies.

Background

The EAST project is part of an intensive pre-session course taken by overseas students wanting to study at the University of Glasgow (UofG). It provides training in language and study skills needed for successful study in a British academic context, and is organised month on month in several blocks that progressively demand more of the students. The last block of the pre-session provision introduces students to subject-specific discourse and conventions, one of them being a Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) strand. As part of the curriculum, the students are exposed to authentic lectures and undertake field trips related to their discipline. They also conduct mini-research into a subject-specific problem of their choosing, to produce a 1,500-word assessed assignment of a Situation-Problem-Response-Evaluation format. This is accompanied by an oral presentation during which the students summarise their findings, and field questions from peers and tutors.

It is this last subject-specialist stage of the pre-sessional course that provided a wider context for the EAST project, and summer 2015 saw the addition of a core telecollaborative component. The engineering students from the partner institution, the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), were asked to provide an initial engineering-related problem for the UK-based students to research over the duration of the SET strand's five weeks. The ongoing content-oriented feedback from the critical friends in Gaza was expected to help the UofG students to fine-tune their understanding of the real-life situation and analyse and evaluate possible ways of resolving it. This idea presented considerable opportunities, as well as interesting and intertwining challenges in terms of course organisation, technology and pedagogy.

Projected outcomes

Leaving aside the adoption (or otherwise) of a partnership with overseas students, the outcome of a successful course for the UofG students was clear from the outset: an overall exit grade allowing progression to their masters course at the University. But the addition of a telecollaborative component promised additional benefits:

- enhanced language practice through development of communication skills in English;
- development of team-working skills;
- development of problem-solving skills;
- increased cross-cultural awareness;
- enhanced digital literacies.

The need for collaboration, and the development of the 'soft' skills, specifically intercultural awareness, were key as they directly respond to the demands of the engineering market discussed in the Introduction. Overseas students studying on the UofG pre-sessional course often come from learning environments that do not prioritise such approaches. Therefore, an early introduction to networked learning promised better chances for students of settling into the UofG, as well as the workplace awaiting them beyond graduation.

The IUG students, unable to join a Masters programme in the UK, would (it was hoped) gain the same core benefits listed above. Since they were participating in the project during their summer holidays, other incentives were offered:

- online training in providing constructive feedback; although this was closely linked to the role they were expected to take on during the EAST project, it was also believed that the development of their critiquing skills could benefit them when collaborating in wider professional contexts;
- an end-of-course certificate to document participation, re-imbursement of travel costs within Gaza from a small fund provided by the UofG, and the inclusion of their names on the project website.

Beyond these tangible outcomes, it was hoped that the EAST Project would also open an ‘online window’ to a wider academic community beyond Gaza, helping to overcome the feelings engendered by lack of mobility, and that the pilot may grow into a more rooted collaboration, with further possibilities for the future development of employability skills and/or postgraduate scholarships.

Project organisation

The beginnings of the project were logistically challenging, as only approximate UofG student numbers could be predicted; based on the previous year’s enrolments, around 40 SET students were expected. Having analysed various scenarios with regard to groupings and how each of them would affect the staff workload in terms of management and monitoring, we decided that between 26 and 28 IUG students would need to be recruited. These would then be divided into pairs according to their specialisations and each pair asked to provide a set of 4 to 5 authentic engineering challenges. The UofG students would have to choose from the set. 13/14 research groups consisting of five members each (3 from UofG and 2 from IUG) would then be formed. Students in Gaza and Glasgow would subsequently work together at the research stage, but the Glasgow-based students would then write their Subject-Specific Essay of course alone (the essay forming part of the ‘gatekeeping’ function of the SET course). The final presentation would be delivered by groups of UofG students to a combined audience in Glasgow and Gaza. The task of the IUG students was to provide the initial problem, feed back mid-project on the responses the UofG students proposed, and to observe/comment on the final presentations. This looked neat and clear on paper, but in reality proved to be a much messier process.

The following sections outline the project milestones and timeline in more detail, indicating challenges and opportunities when appropriate. Phases 1 and 2 refer to time prior to the commencement of the project (although phase 2 overlaps with the subsequent stage), and Phase 3 covers the duration of the tele-collaboration between UofG and IUG students.

Phase 1: The EAST Project presented in Gaza

Prior to the start of the SET Pre-session course at UofG, the IUG partner selected appropriate candidates from those students who had expressed an interest in participation. The selection criteria included an engineering-related specialisation, a good communicative command of the English language, and willingness to commit to 5 weeks during their summer holidays. The bulk of those selected were from a science background, e.g. Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Software Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Engineering with Management, although three students with language backgrounds were also included to offer language support and to ensure sufficient numbers. It was decided these non-engineers would be paired with an IUG scientist, thus marrying the language and science needs of the subsequent tasks.

The IUG participants were then able to meet the UofG organisers, who further explained the EAST project and took questions. The two introductory sessions were held via WiziQ, a virtual room providing facilities for online presentations and communication in real time, available courtesy of IUG. Information was also provided via a project website, particularly its blog: <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>. Following two synchronous introductory sessions, 26 IUG students opted in. They joined a closed Facebook group for ease of communication, and were offered online training in providing constructive feedback.

Phase 2: Training in constructive feedback

The training in constructive feedback consisted of a sequence of 5 tasks delivered via Google Docs and spread over three weeks in July and beginning of August. The tasks followed the exploration-integration-application format, inspired by Garrison and Arbaugh's practical inquiry model^[12], and were released one by one for the students to complete in groups of 3-4. The sequence started with personal reflections on the experience of receiving and providing feedback posted in multimodal format to an online noticeboard: <http://bit.ly/22rKzQn>. Next, in an information-gap reading activity, the students researched constructive feedback, then

shared findings within their groups in order to compile a list of principles and good practices. In order to construct meaning from the exploration phase the students read short examples of feedback provided in a range of fictitious situations and evaluated them from the point of view of appropriacy, constructivity, politeness and other criteria they had agreed on earlier. The next integration-oriented task asked them to read a short piece describing a UK engineering-challenge, and then to read two examples of feedback on the piece, one constructive, one less so, selecting the more constructive of the two. The last activity, aiming at application of the skills and knowledge, required each group to provide constructive feedback on one of three short pieces on engineering challenges in Gaza (regarding power-cuts, groundwater contamination, and water shortages for agriculture).

The inputs in the last two stages of the sequence had been written by the English language teachers at UofG, who had only limited knowledge either of engineering or of the myriad difficulties facing people in Gaza. For the purposes of the desired training in constructive feedback, we posited this as a potential advantage; the IUG students, 80% of whom were studying engineering at a masters level, would be presented very quickly with a lay analysis, similar to that which could be expected from many of the incoming UofG participants, and would need to tailor their feedback accordingly. While not seeking to ignore the scale of the problems in Gaza, we were concerned that immediate exposure to the full scale of the challenges facing the country would prove too daunting for the UK-based students, and we also hoped that our IUG partner-students would bear this in mind, particularly in the initial stages of the collaboration; it was better that any frustration from Gazan participants was expressed to us the organisers, prior to the commencement of the collaboration (when, of course, IUG participants could elect to leave without damaging the project) rather than during the project itself.

Not all the groups completed the task and, in the case of those who did, the extent of each team member's participation was hard to quantify. However, taking a more qualitative approach to analysing the content of the students' responses, some interesting insights can be drawn. The constructive feedback from IUG participants was very varied. Some attempted to remedy perceived language issues but, as organisers, we had to ensure that IUG participants avoided any language-assistance (which would cast doubt on the end-of-course language report given to the UofG students). Some, unsurprisingly, noted the lack of technical know-how of the writers; some were understandably frustrated by the unspoken political issues that

underlay the responses proposed and that will condition even the best-intentioned and best-resourced suggestions; some were able to accept these shortcomings and to provide supportive comments nonetheless. All, without exception, responded in a valid manner. The feedback we as organisers were able to give on the IUG participants' comments, drawing on the different strengths of each group's responses, set up the next phase sufficiently well.

Phase 3: The EAST Project (August 2015)

Parallel to engagement in the generic constructive feedback training, the IUG participants were asked to identify the problems they hoped would be of interest to UofG students. Ultimately, only 10 IUG groups submitted, two having missed the deadline, due respectively to power cuts, and to other commitments. This shortfall created some (surmountable) organisational difficulties during the twinning of UofG and IUG student-groups.

In the end there were 36 students on the SET pre-session course in UofG: 60% were Chinese, 20% spoke Arabic as their first language, 15% were from Brazil (undergraduates) and the remainder from Taiwan, Thailand and Italy. When presented with the project and the scenarios, most of the students expressed a very limited awareness of the issues facing Gaza. The formation of the UofG groups-of-three was initially a messy process, but the groups (of different mother tongues) were formed successfully, each centred around a problem sent from IUG:

- Generating electricity for wastewater treatment
- Water drainage and sea pollution in Gaza
- Toxicity of pesticides in Gaza
- Groundwater salinity in Gaza
- Road traffic and effects on the environment
- Development of Arabic optical character recognition (OCR)
- I.T. applications in medicine

Having formed the groups, the students could begin collaborating, following the time frames detailed in the project brief (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Subsequent tasks and approximate timeframes for UofG and IUG students participating in the EAST project.

Time	UofG students (sts)	IUG students	Staff
Week 1	Sts joined the communal Facebook group and scenario related groups to facilitate collaboration. Some groups opted for other technologies, eg Skype, Whatsapp, etc.		Staff could access Facebook groups and were on standby to help to troubleshoot. The use of other technologies was not monitored.
Week 2	Sts researched the selected scenario via library and the Internet.		
		Sts provided constructive feedback on the preliminary analysis and answered outstanding questions.	
	Based on the feedback, they wrote the first draft stating the problem and one fully-written response.		
Week 3			UogG staff provided feedback on language and structure.
Week 4	Sts continued researching and writing up.	Sts continued to guide by providing content-oriented comments.	
Week 5	Sts submitted essays and delivered short presentations.	Sts attended presentations via a video link and asked questions and commented. They were asked to produce short video clips illustrating the effects of the topic of the collaboration.	UofG staff provided summative feedback on essays and presentations.
	Presentation of video clips from IUG students. Presentation of certificates of participation to IUG students.		

	Social time.
--	--------------

Evaluation of the EAST Project

An anonymous online questionnaire was distributed to participants from both universities on the final day. It consisted of a series of closed and open-ended questions, the latter having been included in order to gather some qualitative data. The response rate was high at 81%, with 27 responses from UofG students and 19 from their IUG peers.

This section presents data relating to the perceived gains in the students' development within the following five areas (aligned with the project's intended outcomes):

- communication skills in English
- team-working skills
- problem-solving skills
- cross-cultural awareness
- enhanced digital literacies

Communication skills in English

According to the Graduate Attributes Matrix from the UofG, an effective communicator is able to 'articulate complex ideas with respect to the needs and abilities of diverse audiences' and 'communicate clearly and confidently, and listen and negotiate effectively with others'. This may be a challenge for many international students, particularly when it comes to non-academic settings. Referring to the work-placement elements of many US engineering courses, Wood^[13] notes that students for whom English is a second language often experience difficulties; while "their academic language ability may be sufficient to manage their coursework, they struggle to cope with the communication demands of a workplace context". This may of course be further complicated by the need to use technologies to communicate across borders and cultures.

When asked about the perceived comfort when having to communicate in English prior to the project, participants from both institutions expressed a degree of uncertainty - just over 60% felt just 'quite comfortable' (see Table 2). Glasgow-based students experienced lower levels of comfort, as demonstrated by higher percentage of those who felt 'uncomfortable' and

lower proportion of those who felt ‘very comfortable’. This may be attributable to the greater familiarity with collaboration and technologies among IUG students, born of necessity (the already-mentioned ‘window’ to the wider world).

Table 2: Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with communicating in English with others via technologies?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very comfortable, no problems at all	21.7	11.1	36.8
Quite comfortable	63	66.7	57.9
Rather uncomfortable	15.2	22.2	5.3

In regard to the evaluation of usefulness of the project for developing communication skills, more than half of the participants from each institution agreed that it was very useful (see Table 3). UofG students seemed more appreciative in this respect, perhaps valuing extra opportunity to practise their English and so prepare better for the pre-session course assessments. 16% of IUG students saw the project as just ‘a little useful’ for the development of communication skills, possibly reflecting the higher level of English among IUG participants and their greater experience of communication in English.

Table 3: To what extent was the project useful in developing your communication skills?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	56.5	55.6	57.9
Quite useful	37	44.4	26.3
A little useful	6.5	0	15.8
Not useful	0	0	0

Looking at the qualitative comments, some interesting insights can be gained. Students from both universities appreciated being put in a situation in which English was the sole medium of communication when working with people from different linguistic backgrounds.

'Our group was formed by 3 students of different nationalities. So we needed to speak just in English and be as clear as possible'. This comment from a UofG student (original spelling and grammar) mirrors very closely the professional settings engineers nowadays often work in, noted in the Introduction. Increased practice opportunities had a direct impact on their perception of their level of English: *'I think the way it improve my communication skills like when i say that i moved from the intermediate level to advanced level'* (IUG student).

Having to communicate with others also had diminished affective factors, particularly feelings of fear or anxiety related to making mistakes, as demonstrated in the following comments from the students: *'I have overcome my fear of communicating with english speakers and enjoy it'* (UofG student); *'I think I have courage now to try speaking English without spend a lot of time to order the words in my mind or be afraid of grammars faults'* (IUG student); *'It was my first experience to talk with others in the English language therefore as an incentive for me in order to work on improving my experience in communication, since the only communicative for me was between family and friends...there these give me more daring and self-confidence'* (IUG student).

Communication with unknown peers also motivated students to participate more actively than they might otherwise have done: *'Presenting a work of a subject I barely knew five weeks before, to people I did not know, with different backgrounds and cultural characteristics requires twice more preparation than to present a known subject to my peers'* (UofG student); *'keeping in touch with people that I newly know them, and when they ask me help it is really important that how I feel that I should help them, even if I was so tired and just arrived from work or even have to work on something else'* (IUG student).

The students became aware of appropriacy issues, and of the need to treat their interlocutors with sensitivity and respect: *'For example, we said hello at the beginning and use suitable words like "could you please". Also, considering about the special situation of them, we avoid asking questions which have some relationship with the sensitive aspects'* (UofG student); *'At first, I didn't know how to communicate with foreigners online and I needed to check whether it was an appropriate phrase before talking to them. But I don't worry about*

that now, because I don't think it's so difficult' (UofG student); 'i was had a problem in the using of slang language in my writing but with communication with UK uni team i try to avoid this problem and i feel that's good' (IUG student).

Lastly, they noted the benefits of the project for the development of subject-specific language: *'We have been pushed to move on the topic by expressing what you think and improved our spoken English in the process' (UofG student); 'For example. In this project, our communication would not only be limited to the daily language. but the professional language. So it is a good practice' (UofG student).*

It has to be acknowledged though that some participants felt that communication with native speakers would be more beneficial: *'The project was very useful although if the project was with other universities inside the UK might be more useful rather than Arabic country, because they can correct some mistake in term of speaking' (UofG student); 'Maybe contacting native speakers would be more effective on our communication skills' (IUG student).* Such perceptions are justified, although undertaking a collaboration with English native speakers would raise a different set of challenges; international students having to collaborate with native speakers often complain about such partnerships being actually counter-productive and frustrating because of communication breakdowns and misunderstandings, which are often less likely among those who already have some awareness of operating in an English as a lingua franca environment^[14].

Team-working skills

No learner, even within subject-specific constraints, exactly mirrors another; each brings different experience and knowledge, from varied backgrounds, and each will have preferences in terms of learning preferences. But despite these differences, students tend to learn better when working together, and the value of collaborative learning as an alternative to longer-established teaching methods has been long-acknowledged. With regard to engineering in particular, as Schaeffer et al.^[3] put it (referring to engineers across a range of specialisations) 'learning is inherently social, which makes student interaction an important part of education', and alongside the value added by fostering creativity, the engineering educator should aim towards activities that encourage interaction, and that recognise the fundamental importance of process over mere product. The ubiquity of the internet means

that any learning environment will also ideally ensure that these processes require participants to work online, to ‘negotiate, construct, and reconstruct new meanings from the contributions of others, in a genuine process of shared knowledge construction’^[15]. Team-working skills are sought-after in academic and professional settings alike. The University of Glasgow Graduate Attributes Matrix expects a student to be ‘experienced in working in groups and teams of varying sizes and in a variety of roles’ and to ‘conduct themselves professionally and contribute positively when working in a team’.

As was the case regarding communication in English, the majority of participants expressed their views on the perceived ease with teamwork with some caution. And again, the IUG students seemed to feel more confident about working in teams (see Table 4).

Table 4: Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with team working?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very comfortable, no problems at all	28.3	14.8	47.4
Quite comfortable	60.9	70.4	47.4
Rather uncomfortable	10.9	14.8	5.3

This result is interesting because, in response to a different question about experience in collaborative work, almost 40% admitted they had ‘none’ and nearly 50% just ‘a little’; the spread was more or less equal across both institutions. Similarly, just over 70% had no experience of any kind in online collaboration. Considering this, it was heartening to see the positive manner in which the students approached the prospect of working together.

In regard to the perceived usefulness of the project for developing team-working skills, a considerable majority of students from both universities thought of it in very or quite positive terms (see Table 5). The number of more sceptical students was the same as in relation to communication skills but spread more evenly across the two institutions. This may be due to the disruptions caused by electricity shortages in Gaza, and frustrations related to tight

deadlines. In addition, Glasgow-based students, under the pressure of assessment, needed to switch back and forth between individual and group work.

Table 5: To what extent was the project useful in developing your team working skills?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	54.3	55.6	52.6
Quite useful	39.1	37	42.1
A little useful	6.5	7.4	5.3
Not useful	0	0	0

Some of the open comments shed light on how the collaboration proceeded. The students learnt a lot about processes related to team work, such as time and task management and the importance of listening to each other: *'In this project, we learn to distribute the jobs, and share the ideas. And sometime even learn to compromise'* (UofG student); *'It allowed me to share my thoughts with others and work on the distribution of work between us more...'* (IUG student); *'The solution was the main part to show that skill. Each of us would persuade others that her or his solution could be helpful for current situation in Gaza. communication, argument and clarification were all the positive results of co-working'* (UofG student).

However, collaboration did not always go smoothly. It seems that success often depended on the individual characteristics and learning preferences of the team members: *'Usually my Glasgow partners used Chinese to communicate in our meetings. No relevant team working was developed since they were reluctant in using English'* (UofG student). This contrasts with: *'team working helps in exchanging knowledge. we used to do the task individually, then compare the answers and sum up with a mixture of them. The result was fantastic! I was very happy to work in a group and have the support and courage to continue'* (IUG student).

Problem-solving skills

A course that can allow students the freedom to develop their own ideas, by experimenting, but without losing academic rigour or abandoning measurable outcomes, will in most cases ensure greater breadth *and* depth of learning overall, as it reflects the situations that students will find in the real world, where issues are often multi-faceted, and choices rarely binary.

The ability to face up to the untidiness of the real world is obviously a key attribute for a student to develop; as Jonassen et al.[16] put it, ‘Engineers are hired, retained, and rewarded for their abilities to solve workplace problems’. They point out the significantly different cognitive processes involved in facing the well-structured story problems often presented in engineering courses, and the complex and ill-structured problems that are often encountered in the workplace.

Looking at the data in Table 6 relating to the perceived confidence in solving problems prior to the project, the students seemed more positive in their assessment (in comparison with communication or team-working skills). The IUG students in particular considered it to be their strength, which probably results from some exposure to professional experience.

Table 6: Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with problem solving?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very comfortable, no problems at all	26.1	11.1	47.4
Quite comfortable	69.6	81.5	52.6
Rather uncomfortable	4.3	7.4	0

They still found the participation useful in consolidating and developing further the ability to investigate the problems and solutions. The UofG students were a bit more sceptical, as demonstrated by one third of them evaluating this aspect as just ‘a little useful’ (see Table 7).

Table 7: To what extent was the project useful in developing your problem solving skills?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	56.5	66.7	42.1
Quite useful	34.8	29.6	42.1
A little useful	8.7	33.3	15.8
Not useful	0	0	0

This scepticism may have originated in the ambiguity of the term ‘problem-solving’. The engineering-related scenarios from the Gazan context lent themselves really well to a multi-faceted analysis, and to creative and innovative thinking, as the variety of unexpected constraints restricted the application of the most obvious solutions. This was a conscious choice, as ‘encourag[ing] students to embrace ambiguity, avoid premature closure, and increase reflection may greatly improve their creative skills’^[17].

The EAST project however presented other instances when problems had to be confronted. For example, the fact that the members within one group often represented different specialisations may have complicated collaboration even more, as this could require more negotiation when diverse views were presented. Overall, the variety of forms the problems could assume - linguistic, technological, cultural - may have led to misunderstanding of the ‘problem-solving’ question posed.

Some of the open comments supported this hypothesis. Looking at the data, it appears likely that many had understood the question to refer specifically to the Gaza-related problem that they had been working on, rather than a generic improvement (or otherwise) to their problem-solving skills. *‘We found the references which use good methods and solutions in other countries. And evaluate whether these responses can used in Gaza’* (UofG student); *‘In this project, I learn to choose the best solution for a problem, catching the context and filtering the nonsense plans at the same time’* (UofG student). However, it is hoped that the students will nevertheless use their experience to reflect on the cognitive processes that take place when solving complex problems in teams in more general terms; it seems they were able to identify what this process entails: *‘I like how they give different solutions and then start to compare and contrast between the possible solutions. This was great’* (IUG student); *‘I always have these problem i never get to solve problems well... but in these project when we had some problem everyone has his own way to deal with it i really took benefits in this i learned how to think first then take actions’* (IUG student). These comments also suggest that the potentialities of the socio-constructivist framework^[18] might be exploited in future by the students, who will also be able to better use online environments to ‘negotiate, construct, and reconstruct new meanings from the contributions of others, in a genuine process of shared knowledge construction’^[15].

Cross-cultural awareness

Among the trends in university engineering education towards experiential, collaborative, creative problem-solving, Katehi and Ross^[19] posit one final key ‘professional awareness’ aspect to any well-grounded tertiary-level engineering course: intercultural competence. Downey et al.^[20] focus more closely on the specific manner in which experience of working with overseas colleagues may be of benefit: ‘Learning to engage understanding and ways of thinking about work that differs from your own would seem to be an obvious objective of any type of employment in a globalizing world. However, it has special significance for engineering education because of the core focus in engineering of problem-solving’. Schaeffer et al.^[3], referenced in the introduction, champion intra-institutional collaboration between students, but if this can be broadened to embrace students in other countries, there is the opportunity to move beyond the social skills that co-operation and teamwork can foster, to a much deeper (and potentially more valuable) development of a cross-cultural competence.

In regard to the participants’ feelings of confidence, cross cultural awareness did not emerge as a strength (see Table 8) prior to the course. One fifth of the students felt uncomfortable, with numbers among IUG students higher than among the Glasgow-based cohort, perhaps attributable to the socio-political context the students operate within on a daily basis.

Table 8: Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with cross-cultural awareness?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very comfortable, no problems at all	19.6	3.7	42.1
Quite comfortable	60.9	81.5	31.6
Rather uncomfortable	19.6	14.8	26.3

Table 9: To what extent was the project useful in developing your cross-cultural awareness?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
--	----------------------	-----------------------	----------------------

Very useful	60.9	55.6	68.4
Quite useful	28.3	33.3	21.1
A little useful	10.9	11.1	10.5
Not useful	0	0	0

However, as Table 9 demonstrates, the post-project evaluation proved very favourable, with 61% of participants appraising the EAST as very useful in developing their cross-cultural awareness, the highest proportion across the five outcomes. The UofG students, being based in an international environment at the time of the project, appreciated the specific rather than general aspects of the cross-cultural collaboration, namely the opportunity to learn about a region and culture that they were little familiar with: *‘This kind of project will aware you that what is happening around us’*; *‘Let us realize the current situation in other countries; and ‘I just knew that there were wars in Gaza, but I didn’t know to what extent they influence in daily life of the people there’*. The IUG students looked at the experience in more general terms: *‘I learned how to respect the cultures of others....before the project it wasn’t a big thing, but when I dealt with others with each one has its own culture, my view of the subject really changed...i actually get to know some cultures and really impressed by some’*; *‘If you ask me what is the most useful thing that you take it from this project i will certainly say the knowledge about cultures, its great thing to share your ideas and thoughts with other people you have just know them, also you can get a full of useful when you chat with them about their habits, thoughts, living and many thing relating to their lives not just taking about the education or college :)’*. However, they also valued the fact that they could educate their international peers about the situation in Gaza: *‘Listening to other people from other nationalities thinking with our problems and solve it is very supportive. Of course, we communicate with other students from different nationalities. I also participate in raising cultural awareness about my country and its problems’*.

Digital literacies

The project would not have been possible without the use of technology, and the development of digital literacies was one of the principal aims. There is often an argument that today’s youth belongs to the ‘digital native’ generation, a generation that lives and functions offline and online equally comfortably^[21]. Increasingly, however, research suggests

that the students may be familiar with social networking sites, as they use them for communication with peers and family, but may struggle with appropriate uses of technology for educational and professional purposes^[22]. The focus here is not so much on the skills in using software and hardware but the selection, purposeful use and critical appraisal of tools and online content; hence the use of the word ‘literacies’ and not ‘skills’ in the heading. It was hoped the students would develop these literacies by conducting research and collaboration in online environments.

The survey results are surprising (see Table 10). First of all, almost one fifth of the participants admitted to feeling uncomfortable about using technology before the EAST Project. It is unknown whether that referred to knowing how to use hardware or software, or the digital literacies per se. The lack of confidence was more pronounced among Glasgow-based students, which may be related to their lack of experience in using technology for work or study-related purposes.

Table 10: Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with digital literacies?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very comfortable, no problems at all	23.9	7.4	47.4
Quite comfortable	56.5	66.7	42.1
Rather uncomfortable	19.6	25.9	10.5

Table 11: To what extent was the project useful in developing your digital literacies?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	32.6	29.6	36.8
Quite useful	58.7	63	52.6
A little useful	8.7	7.4	10.5
Not useful	0	0	0

Student appraisal of the usefulness of the project in respect to the development of digital literacies is much less favourable than for the other four outcomes (see Table 11). While communication, team-working, problem-solving, and cross-cultural awareness attract ‘very useful’ ratings among the majority of the participants, in the case of digital literacies, only one third felt that the experience had contributed to an enhancement.

The open comments in response to the question engendered fewer responses than for the other outcomes, suggesting that the students viewed ‘digital literacies’ as the particular technical skills in using software and hardware. This perception probably explains reference to actual skills that the student practised during the project: ‘*the project developed my writing and printing skills*’ (IUG student); or understandings of how certain technologies work: ‘*Actually, I think the topic doesn’t have much relation to my subjects, but I found an article using the latest technology-data mining to solve it. I learn a lot and i know once are you thinking, anything has a relation to each other*’ (UofG student). One IUG student asserted: ‘*Well, I am an Information Technology graduated girl :D*’, which points to her already high level of technology-related skills, which a simple telecollaboration may not affect to a significant degree. The understanding of ‘digital literacies’ appears to us worth addressing and discussing with students when the next version of the project is run as, based on the ratings for the other four skills, it seems the students did use technology in purposeful and critically valid ways.

Discussion of challenges

The University of Glasgow perspective

It must be stressed that the EAST project formed just one part of the pre-session course, supporting the Subject-Specific Essay and the related presentation, both of which contributed only partially to the end-of-course writing and speaking scores. As reading and listening inputs were wholly unrelated to EAST, it can be speculated that the EAST Project formed no more than 25% of the UofG students’ overall assessment. There was concern from the UofG organisers that students might not consider the efforts put into the EAST Project commensurate with the potential outcomes. Though post-course evaluation did not bear this out, any future developments will need to consider the global requirements of the UofG participants, i.e. their need for tasks that will both develop and provide certifiable outputs in

all of the skills areas needed for their future survival in linguistic and study terms in their coming masters courses.

Regarding specifics, one area to focus on in future would be closer monitoring of the ‘outline’ stage. Weaker groups, perhaps overawed by the scale of the problems facing Gaza, tended to present a first draft heavily-weighted towards the ‘Situation’ at a global level, e.g. ‘What is global warming?’, showing reluctance to engage with any actual responses. If the project is repeated in the future, we should encourage them at this stage to imagine the problem as a purely scientific issue, i.e. divorced in this initial stage from the particularities of the situation in Gaza. For example, a group looking at the problems associated with global warming and agriculture in Gaza could be asked to look at the problem (and potential responses) from the perspective of a coastal community in their own country; it would be the task of the IUG partner-group to point out subsequently the applicability of their suggestions (or otherwise) in the Gazan context.

Last but not least, what needs to be taken into account is the increased workload and time demands for both students and staff, resulting from having to manage communication in online environments, mostly in an asynchronous (delayed) mode.

The Islamic University of Gaza perspective

Facing and overcoming challenges in different aspects of life is a Palestinian reality, and by equipping their students and graduates’ with enhanced knowledge, ‘attributes’, skills and values, universities such as IUG hope to improve their future prospects. However, some challenges are beyond the resources available to these institutions. One of the difficulties IUG faced was matching the specialisation of UofG students to their counterparts at IUG. For example, IUG has no postgraduate programmes in the fields of Statistics, Marine System Science, or Mechatronics (three fields presented by individual UofG students). This challenge was resolved by choosing students who have similar specialisations, such as mechanical engineering and electrical engineering.

Another challenge was related to the timing of the EAST project, which was held during the summer holiday of IUG and (partially) during the month of Ramadan. The perseverance and determination of the participants, all of whom joined the project as volunteers, enabled them

to overcome this combined challenge. The bottom line in Gaza is unemployment, particularly amongst Gaza's youth where it exceeds 60%^[23], and the determination among the students to build a better future for themselves, their families and community was visible to the UK partners from the outset.

Ways Forward

Already during the introductory sessions for the IUG students, it was felt that the set of benefits for both groups was imbalanced, to the detriment of IUG. They asked about input specifically designed for them but this request could not be accommodated at the time of the pilot. UofG students also commented on this unequal distribution of benefits and felt that greater involvement of the Palestinian partners would be welcome. In fact, they made a number of suggestions of how this engagement could manifest itself:

- IUG students could present the initial problem in a more elaborate and detailed form, including multimodal formats, e.g. video.
- In the latter stages of the project, IUG students could write a short essay which formally evaluates the solutions provided by UofG students; alternatively they might provide their own solutions, in the form of short academic presentations on the final day, following on from their UK partners'.
- IUG students could be given access to UofG Library online databases during the project in order to facilitate search for sources relevant to the EAST project as well as their own, non-EAST-related research, should they wish.

One way to redress this imbalance could be to build in some form of remuneration for the work undertaken by the IUG students, especially given that the pre-session course in Glasgow coincides with the summer holidays in Gaza. IUG students could provide assistance with technologies, manage the students' interaction on Facebook, or oversee the Project's wider presence on social media. A mentoring scheme could be instituted, pairing UofG students with more experienced partners in Gaza, and this might also be extended to include other 'leadership by example' skills such as coaching in research, helping with goal-setting, asking effective questions, and establishing a Socratic dialogue. Performing such duties and/or undertaking more extensive training would strengthen the employability skills of the students in Gaza.

Leaving aside the imbalances of the pilot, an issue touched on by students at both universities was the perception that lingua franca communication was less valid than communication with L1 speakers. We hope that we have made the case for the many benefits of the former in this article, but perhaps the upside of communicating with non-native peers needs to be made explicit to all students from the outset, and parallels with real-life workplace scenarios emphasised. But of course a possible extension of the project to include L1 engineers would be a very exciting prospect, one to be encouraged should partners present themselves in future (the potential value, too, to the L1 speakers need scarcely be emphasised).

Another learning outcome from the pilot suggests that ‘niche’ SET groups might be formed; the small number of UofG statisticians in particular struggled to find common ground with their UofG (and IUG) collaborators, and a cross-border subject-related group might be beneficial in future (this had been considered initially, but discarded for organisational reasons).

These are all ideas leading to a deepening of the collaboration initiated between the two universities; of course the project scope could also be *broadened*. One potential avenue being explored involves expansion of EAST to embrace those studying biomedical sciences at UofG and IUG (the problem-based learning approach to medical training at UofG opens up potentially stimulating options for pre-sessional language-enhancement collaboration). Looking for ways of involving other universities is also a route that appeals, hence our desire to address ASEE members directly in New Orleans, in order to gauge possible interest from a U.S. partner institution or business.

Conclusion

This article has presented a writing and research collaborative project between Palestinian engineering graduates in Gaza and international students preparing to study SET disciplines at a British university. Although small-scale, we feel that the EAST project has allowed the UofG and the IUG to promote greater risk-taking, student-student interaction, and creativity, and hope that this analysis may also offer insights of value to other universities. Specifically, we hope that the EAST project has demonstrated how technology-enabled interventions to course design may positively affect the learning experience for overseas student-engineers,

enabling participants to start working towards a potentially invaluable global competence, i.e. an ‘ability to work effectively with people who define problems differently than oneself’^[20].

But the benefits of the project did not start and end with the student-engineers; as teachers, we engaged in the same process as our students. Through devising and co-ordinating the project, establishing and managing meaningful learning experiences in online environments, we too developed to a noticeable extent the five core skills discussed in the article. Thanks to the ‘distance’ element, we feel that our classrooms and our institutions have ‘become ‘flatter’ and more ‘connected’^[24], with knowledge, skills and values flowing across geographical and cultural borders. We are English language teachers, not engineers, but we feel the EAST project foregrounds the global cultural consciousness not only in terms of cultural literacy, that is learning about other cultures, but also what Kumaravadivelu^[25] terms cultural ‘liberty’, i.e. learning *from* other cultures, something of considerable value to language-learners, to engineers, and (of course) to language-learning engineers the world over.

References

- 1 - Shuman, L. J., Besterfield-Sacre, M., McGourty, J. (2005) The ABET ‘Professional skills’: Can they be taught? Can they be assessed? *Journal of Engineering Education*, 94/1, 41-55. (43)
- 2 - White, C. (2007) Focus on the language learner in an era of globalization: Tensions, positions and practices in technology-mediated language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 40/4, 321–326. (325)
- 3 - Schaeffer, D., Panchal, J.H., Thames, J.L., Haroon, S., Mistree, F. (2012) Educating engineers for the near tomorrow, *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 28/2, 381-396.
- 4 - Lucena, J., Downey, G., Jesiek, B., Elber, S. (2008) Competencies beyond countries: The re-organization of Engineering Education in the United States, Europe and Latin America, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 97/4, 433-447. (433)
- 5 - Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, Buckingham: Open University Press, McGraw Hill. (60)
- 6 - Grosse, C.U. and Voigt, G.M. (1991) The Evolutions of Languages for Specific Purposes in the United States. *Modern Language Journal*, 75/2, 181-195.
- 7 - Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M.J. (1991) *Developments in ESP. A multidisciplinary approach*. Cambridge: CUP.

- 8 - Gilbert, J. (2013) English for Academic Purposes. In G. Motteram (Ed.) *Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching*. British Council, 117-144. Online: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/C607%20Information%20and%20Communication_WEB%20ONLY_FINAL.pdf Accessed 27/01/2016.
- 9 - Kern, N. (2013) Technology-integrated English for Specific Purposes lessons: real-life language, tasks, and tools for professionals. In G. Motteram (Ed.) *Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching*. British Council, 89-115. Online: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/C607%20Information%20and%20Communication_WEB%20ONLY_FINAL.pdf Accessed 27/01/2016.
- 10 - Warschauer, M. and Kern, R. (Eds) (2000) *Network-based language teaching: Concepts and practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 11 - Crawford, E. and Kirby, M. (2008) Fostering Students' Global Awareness: technology applications in social studies teaching and learning. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 2/1, 56-73.
- 12 - Garrison, D.R. and Arbaugh, J.B. (2007) Researching the community of inquiry framework: Review, issues, and future directions. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10/3, 157-172.
- 13 - Wood, D. (2009) Preparing ESP learners for workplace placement, *English Language Teaching Journal*, 63/4, 313-322.
- 14 - Sovic, S. (2008) *Lost in Transition? The International Students' Experience Project. Creative Learning in Practice*. Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.
- 15 - Mayordomo, R.M. & Onrubia, J. (2015) Work coordination and collaborative knowledge construction in a small group collaborative virtual task, *Internet and Higher Education*, 25/1, 96-104. (96)
- 16 - Jonassen, D.H., (2004) *Learning to solve problems: An instructional design guide*, San Francisco, California Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- 17 - Daly, S.R., Mosyjowski, E.A., Seifert, C.M. (2014) Teaching creativity in Engineering courses, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 103/3, 417-449.
- 18 - Ligorio, M.B., Loperfido, F.F., Sansone, N., Spadaro, P.F. (2011) Blending educational models to design blended activities. In F. Pozzi & D. Persico (Eds) *Techniques for fostering collaboration in online learning communities: Theoretical and practical perspectives*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 64-81.
- 19 - Katehi, L. & Ross, M. (2007) Technology and Culture: Exploring the creative instinct through cultural interpretation, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 96/2, 89-90.
- 20 - Downey, G.L., Lucena, J.C., Moskal, B.M., Parkhurst, R., Bigley, T., Hays, C., Jesiek, B.K., Kelly, L., Miller, J., Ruff, S., Lehr, J.L., Nichols-Belo, A. (2006) *The Globally*

Competent Engineer: Working effectively with people who define problems differently, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 95/2, 107-122. (108 / 109)

21 - Prensky, M. (2001) Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.

22 - Jones, C., Ramanau, R., Cross, S. and Healing, G. (2010). Net generation or Digital Natives: Is there a distinct new generation entering university? *Computers & Education*, 54/3, 722–732. Online: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/19890/> Accessed 29/01/2016.

23 - World Bank (2015) Main report. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Online: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2015/09/25081078/economic-monitoring-report-ad-hoc-liaison-committee-vol-2-main-report> Accessed 29/01/2016.

24 - Friedman, T.L. (2005) *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

25 - Kumaravadivelu, B. (2008), *Cultural Globalization and Language Education*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Paper 5:

A UK-Palestine online EAP collaboration for science graduates

Context

Every summer English for Academic Study (EAS) at the University of Glasgow runs a subject-specific EAP course for international students seeking to study on post-graduate courses at a British HE institution. One of the discipline offered is Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), which attracts prospective electrical, civil, mechanical and software engineers as well as geologists, statisticians or mathematicians. The students work on improving their language skills to achieve an overall 6.5 equivalent of IELTS with a view of starting their master's or PhD in September. In terms of assessment, in the previous years, they had to produce an individually written 1500-word report following a Situation-Problem-Response-Evaluation structure on a discipline-related topic of their choosing and an oral presentation summarising their findings.

Challenge

Although the format worked well and the students were developing both language proficiency and a range of study skills necessary for succeeding on their future courses, we felt the learning experience could be improved to better address the expectations of the prospective engineers, namely the need to work effectively in international teams in networked environments. It was also crucial to improve engagement with content in a way that is more interactive than reading subject-specific materials. However, as the majority of pre-sessional courses take place when the relevant faculty staff are on leave, instituting such opportunities proved a challenge. In order to extend the outcomes to include the most desirable prerequisites, eg becoming a scholar, a lifelong learner and a global citizen (Biggs and Tang, 2011), we established a partnership with the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) and piloted an innovative English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) with Palestinian science and engineering graduates in August 2015.

EAST Project

Unemployment among engineering graduates in Palestine is high and one way of addressing the issue could be to work remotely. In order to develop the necessary e-working skills, the

project organisers agreed that the Gazan students would take on a role of mentors, as this would allow them to develop and hone a number of relevant attributes, such as online communication or collaboration. To lay the foundations for such a development, EAS offered online constructive feedback training, a sequence of tasks following an exploration-integration- application framework, culminating in the students writing up feedback on a fictitious student's written sample, a task closely aligned with their future role during the pre-session course.

Next, pairs of IUG students devised a range of Gaza-related engineering problems, e.g. 'Groundwater salinity in Gaza' or 'Development of Arabic OCR'. On arrival in Glasgow, the SET students formed groups of three, avoiding any monolingual groupings, and chose a Gaza-related problem to research. Throughout the next five weeks they worked closely with their Palestinian partners to develop a thorough understanding of the context and offer solutions appropriate for the context. As planned, the Gazans acted as mentors providing content-related guidance, leaving the job of language-focused feedback to the EAP teachers in Scotland. The groups remained in contact via social media, e.g. Facebook, which facilitated the sharing of relevant materials, articles, videos as well as interactions crucial for ongoing refinement and critical evaluation of ideas. While the students worked collaboratively on researching the scenarios, the final reports were produced individually in order to retain the course gate-keeping function. However, the presentations were delivered in groups with the Gazan mentors attending and providing feedback via a videoconference link.

Evaluation

The project was evaluated highly, with positive comments in regard to the development of language, team-working and problem-solving skills, enhancement of content knowledge, cross-cultural awareness and digital literacies, from both student groups. The Glasgow-based students particularly appreciated working with real-life scenarios from a country that is very much in need of sustainable solutions, while their Gazan counterparts commented on the opportunities for international collaboration to make the 'voice of Gaza' heard.

As organisers, we recognise the lack of balance in the set of outcomes for both groups and we are striving to address it in the next iteration of the project in August 2016. But for the time being we feel that by a simple refocusing of the course towards Gaza, and the exploitation of

technology for educational purposes, we fostered ‘understandings of the interrelationships of people worldwide, thereby preparing [our students] to participate meaningfully as global citizens’ (Crawford and Kirby, 2008).

Project website: <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>

References

- Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2011) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Buckingham: Open University Press, McGraw Hill.
- Crawford, E. and Kirby, M. (2008) Fostering Students’ Global Awareness: technology applications in social studies teaching and learning. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 2(1), 56-73.

Paper 6:

Establishing and sustaining EAP student partnerships across borders

Abstract

UK universities rely increasingly on the fees paid by overseas students, whose numbers have grown significantly in the past 20 years. Many of these students enter via pre-sessional courses, which combine language development with work on study skills and acculturation into academic life. Peak student-intake falls naturally in July and August, when lecturers are on leave, and the content-shortfall is a challenge for course-providers.

At the same time, there are many universities worldwide whose student-bodies combine strong English language skills with up-to-date content knowledge, while lacking the resources needed to study abroad. Significant numbers of these students would view the possibility of collaboration with students on pre-sessional courses at HE institutions in the UK very positively.

The potential for synergies seems clear, but has as yet not been exploited.

We piloted a dual tele-collaboration between the University of Glasgow (UoG), UK, and the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), Palestine, on the August 2016 pre-sessional course in Glasgow. Applicants to Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) masters-level courses in Glasgow were mentored by SET graduates with strong language skills in Gaza. At the same time, applicants to Biomed masters-level courses in Glasgow were partnered (a different role) with Biomed graduates in Gaza. Interactions through the 5-week pre-sessional course relied on a range of digital platforms.

Post-course, an analysis of these collaboration-types, one ‘vertical’, the other more ‘horizontal’, has provided data of value to future collaborations between the two institutions. We also offer a set of guidelines, usable by other institutions interested in creating similar cross-border links.

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized and mobile world, growing numbers of students are interested in studying abroad and, specifically, in using English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI). In the UK alone, latest UCAS figures (2015) placed 430,000 overseas students in higher education. In order to gain confidence and ability to manipulate the language, students often choose to complete a pre-sessional course which, apart from academic language development (referred to as English for Academic Purposes, EAP), offers a focus on study and transferrable skills, such as communicating effectively in a range of academic and professional genres, collaboration and problem-solving skills. Many of these programmes move towards subject-specific input in their final phases, offering a unique opportunity to develop language skills in the context of a prospective field or discipline, often referred to as English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). Through dealing with a range of relevant academic texts, both written and spoken, the students get a chance to better-prepare for their forthcoming masters or doctoral studies.

The courses are taught by qualified and experienced EAP teachers who understand the challenges of using a language in an academic setting and who may have some background or at least interest in a given discipline. Content lecturers sometimes contribute to the course delivery by giving a lecture on a discipline-related topic but since the pre-sessional courses usually take place during university summer holidays, more substantial face-to-face engagement on their part to supplement written course materials is often impossible. Video- and web-based input can overcome this shortfall to an extent, but students nevertheless miss content-rich and academically-authentic interactions at this key phase of the acculturation process. This represents a significant problem across HE institutions in the UK.

Alongside this current problem, there is a potential resource: universities overseas. These institutions are not necessarily within Kachru's (2006) 'inner' (or even the 'outer') circles, but many offer great strengths, and would be eager to foster links with English-speaking universities, even informally, in order to enhance the learning and teaching experience. Their students often possess language skills and more importantly content knowledge that match or even exceed the standards represented by international students attending a pre-sessional course in the UK. Could UK universities tap into this potential, and establish mutually beneficial relationships in form of student partnerships and staff collaboration? Might such

relationships develop beyond the confines of the pre-sessional course, into more extensive knowledge exchange projects?

We feel that a ‘template’ formed by a successful UK-expanding circle pre-sessional tele-collaboration, as outlined at the end of this report, could be of very real value, helping to point out possible synergies via creating cross-border ties, furthering EMI via innovative uses of ICT, and enhancing the development potential of ELT. This kind of ‘virtual mobility’ is likely to feed into institutions’ broader and strategic internationalisation activities (O’Dowd, 2013). It is also very much in line with the European Commission’s recommendation of promoting student and staff mobility in order to help the participants develop skills needed in an increasingly globalised workplace, and to raise intercultural awareness (of extra significance, given the current migrant and refugee crises).

This report describes a ‘peer review’ tele-collaboration, linking overseas pre-sessional Masters students at the University of Glasgow (UoG), UK, with their counterparts at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), Palestine in summer 2016. There were two subject-specific groups, namely SET and Biomedical Sciences, and each followed a different format of collaboration, the choice of which was dictated by the particular needs of the participants. The SET partnership was more vertical in nature, akin to a mentoring relationship, while the students within the Biomed cohort developed a more horizontal relationship with parties from both the institutions being co-researchers on equal terms. The paper reports on the course design and rationale, and examines the opportunities and challenges these two different modes of student partnerships present to students, teachers and institutions when it comes to language learning and teaching, content knowledge exchange, and development of transferrable skills, as well as the creation of sustainable research links and a feasible internationalisation strategy. This serves as the basis for developing a set of guidelines that other educators working with international students and/or at overseas HE institutions could use in order to set up, run and further develop similar collaborations in their contexts.

Literature Review

Tele-collaboration in language learning is nothing new; as part of network-based learning, it has existed for 30 years (O’Dowd, 2007) and initially it focused mostly on facilitating contact between language learners with speakers of a target language through technologies. It was a

way of expanding a physical classroom and exposing learners to authentic use of the language and culture. One of the more common forms of tele-collaboration is eTandem, whereby two learners teach each other their mother tongue using email or dedicated software. Usually a student provides a written response of prescribed length to which the partner provides corrections and suggestions and then they swap roles. This way through the interaction with a more able peer, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is created where a lot of learning may take place. For this kind of project to work and benefit the engaged parties in equal measure, two criteria have to be satisfied: reciprocity and autonomy (Appel and Mullen, 2000). Each participating student has to carefully balance their input and output in their role of a learner and mentor and their contributions have to be qualitatively and quantitatively of the same standard in order to maintain motivation at a high level. Apart from email exchanges, telecollaboration projects may include students jointly analysing cultural practices associated with their languages and students working on cross-curricular assignments in order to appreciate multicultural and multilingual nature of the globalised world. To reflect a range of uses, O'Dowd (2007: 144) defines telecollaboration as 'the use of online communication tools to connect language learners in different countries for the development of collaborative project work and intercultural exchange'. He admits though that despite the explicit inclusion of intercultural training in the definition, learning outcomes of such projects usually focus on developing language fluency and learner autonomy. Considering the fact that English as Lingua Franca is on the rise, it seems that the definition of the term has to be extended to cover a greater variety of contexts in which the participants use the common linguistic medium to understand not necessarily the cultures associated with English but each other's cultures. Consequently, the language becomes the means to an end rather than sole end in itself. This is related to EAP and ESAP settings which shift the focus from pure language training to academic skills and content knowledge to prepare the students for future studies in English (EMI). Bringing in more able peers in such an educational context is of particular importance and value as it has the potential to fill in the gap of lack of ongoing and authentic quality content input, identified in the introduction. The project this paper reports on attempts to reconceptualise telecollaboration in language education as a much richer learning experience, one that not only gives the participants opportunities to develop language but also rather a range of study skills, transferable skills and content knowledge.

There are a number of challenges related to instituting telecollaborative projects in educational settings. The important ones include the way in which the task is designed, the changes to the roles of learners and teachers, and the way in which the technology is integrated.

In terms of structuring, telecollaborative projects may be anywhere on the spectrum from completely free activities to highly structured sequences of tasks with clearly defined outcomes and assessments. They may also be tightly embedded in the curriculum and so preceded or followed by face-to-face activities in the classroom, or completely independent. O'Dowd (2007) suggests integrating learning episodes into the teaching time in the classroom, during which a teacher models telecollaborative practices in order to support the student participants. This is because it cannot be assumed that the learners possess the skills needed to successfully participate in online exchanges. This recommendation is in line with Greener's (2009: 268) idea of e-modelling, which is 'powerful, offering opportunities for attention, retention, reproduction and motivation to learn vicariously [...] helpful for learners, particularly non-traditional students [...] on the assumption that the teacher is prepared to appear open and perhaps vulnerable in class [...] What they are there to demonstrate is a valuing of learning processes, rather than a valuing of content'. As a result, the teacher's role may require a nuanced shift from 'purveyor of information to counsellor and manager of learning resources' (Little, 1991: 44-45 in Appel and Mullen, 2000: 297). The teacher may also take on the roles of organiser, intercultural partner, model and coach, and source and resource (O'Dowd, 2007), which means being more active than merely a facilitator. Unsupervised exchanges often fall apart (Appel and Mullen, 2000) and structured projects may result in students performing the tasks more efficiently and effectively. However, Dawn Bikowski, in her 2011 review paper, notices this requires bringing the teacher to the fore and asks if telecollaborative projects could focus on real-world issues and allow the participants to discover each other's cultures more inductively.

When it comes to the use of technology, historically telecollaboration has relied on email or other technologies supporting written communication. This comes in with benefits and challenges. The exchange is by definition asynchronous and delayed, which means flexibility and availability despite temporal and spatial differences and conflicting schedules on the one hand but also the need to spread the interaction over a longer period of time. This may not be possible on intensive short courses and additionally motivation may require occasional

boosting throughout the project. A written exchange is not transient but permanent and so each message can be carefully edited and re-read multiple times, which facilitates reflection on the part of both the writer and the reader (Appel and Mullen, 2000). It also has to be noted that emailing or messaging can contribute to the rapid development of communicative competence and certain aspects of writing in a foreign language, for example awareness of the audience (ibid).

Telecollaboration strongly relies on the idea of peer learning and peer teaching, an important component of which is the provision of feedback. Traditionally, in a university setting it had been a teacher who provided knowledge and feedback, but increasingly one can observe a shift from such methods toward peer-to-peer contacts. All Russell Group universities in the UK now acknowledge the value of such interactions for the development of a range of ‘graduate attributes’, such as communication skills, social awareness, and ability to reflect (see, for example, the University of Glasgow’s:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183776_en.pdf). Ladyshevsky (2006) suggests that using peers to provide feedback may also lead to an increase in critical thinking, an obvious advantage in a university context. As Topping (2009:22) points out, such feedback offers a quantitative advantage, too: ‘Because there are more students than teachers in most classrooms, feedback from peers can be more immediate and individualised than can teacher feedback’. Touching on the potential for peer review to address social and affective factors, Sadler (1989:120) notes that ‘few physical, intellectual or social skills can be acquired satisfactorily simply through being told about them. Most require practice in a supportive environment which incorporates feedback loops’.

The question, we feel, is not whether peer feedback is a worthwhile supplement to more traditional input, but how best to implement it. For example, Ware and O’Dowd (2008) looked into two different models of telecollaboration, namely e-tutoring and e-partnering. In the first case, the students were explicitly asked to provide corrective feedback and/or suggestions of improvement having received basic training in doing so. In the other case, the students did not have the obligation to provide feedback unless they decided to do it of their own accord. The researchers have found that the first condition resulted in a greater amount of peer feedback, which corroborated findings from similar studies into synchronous peer exchanges. This would demonstrate the importance of not only training students in providing meaningful and useful feedback but also creating time and space for feedback provision in

the project timeline. It would also be in line with a set of criteria for successful peer feedback as outlined by Gibbs and Simpson in 2004 – that it be detailed, promptly received and understandable to students. Another interesting idea in regard of harnessing the advantages of peer feedback comes from Nicol (2011), who emphasises the need for integrating as much reciprocity as possible into the feedback cycles. In other words, students analyse a number of peer assignments and have their own work looked at by a few peers instead of just one. By being exposed to a greater range of responses to the assignment brief, students clarify and crystallise their ideas of how the assessment prompt can be tackled in optimal ways, guaranteeing better performance. This approach to peer feedback could strengthen pedagogical benefits of telecollaboration if students can share their work within bigger groups.

The situation becomes slightly more complicated in purely ELT contexts, whereby the student-partners are not necessarily more able peers and students' perceptions and concerns regarding their own and peers' language proficiency are at play. The students may not feel entirely confident and well qualified to give feedback to each other, especially when it comes to areas of greater complexity than lower-order grammar and lexical errors. Neither do they necessarily see their peers' feedback as useful and resulting in noticeable improvement of their work and they attach more value to the tutor feedback. This is not to say such peer feedback is not worth engaging with but the students may be resistant at first and may require more thorough training in order to develop robust evaluative skills. Such difficulties can be circumvented in an EAP/ESAP context in which the students are asked to provide feedback mainly related to content, while the language feedback still predominantly comes from the tutor.

Bringing in a cohort of students who are peers in terms of the language proficiency, but who can be mentors when it comes to content knowledge, constitutes an interesting opportunity and one that is now feasible thanks to the availability of digital technologies, a material change that can and perhaps should be exploited in the context of pre-sessional courses. It seems to us that there is real scope for the introduction of an effective peer-review process on a pre-sessional course which exploits the distance potentialities of the web. What is important to take into account when designing such a telecollaborative project is the nature of the relationship between the partner-students, whereby one is the reviewer/mentor and the other one a reviewee/mentee. Since the roles are not equal as in the more standard models of

telecollaboration, a question arises whether the principle of reciprocity mentioned earlier can be fostered within the confines of such a project. In the case of a negative answer, another question would be whether such an exchange still constitutes an example of telecollaboration as conceived when the idea was still in its infancy.

It seems that in a traditional telecollaboration set-up, as well as peer feedback cycles as described by Nicol, reciprocity involves a peer exchange during which the partners' gains are comparable in terms of quantity and quality. In other words, each student is supposed to take away what they put in. Could the mutuality be defined differently, for example in ways that are more contextualised and personalised in order to address the diverse needs, wants and motivations of the participating students? And if so, how can providers ensure the gains are of more or less equal weight and value?

Responding to the students' varied needs would be in line with the nature of teaching English for Specific Purposes and its main tenets: attention to context, cross-cultural issues, needs analysis, authenticity of communication and materials and focus of situational practice. Dudley-Evans and Johns (1991:298) stress the importance of being constantly aware of the 'identifiable group of adult learners within a specific context' when designing ESP activities. White (2007:325) reminds us that in the globalised and rapidly changing world, ESP teachers have to help their students 'deal with global communicative practices online, in all their complexities. This echoes very closely what engineering educators are calling for: 'an ability to collaborate in distributed corporate settings, across countries, continents and cultures' (Schaeffer *et al.*, 2012) with people from other educational, professional and cultural backgrounds (Lucena *et al.*, 2008). Any university student should now aim to become not only a scholar but also a lifelong learner and a global citizen (Biggs and Tang, 2011). To facilitate such development, digital technologies may prove helpful as 'through infusion of both global education and technology in teaching and learning, teachers can foster students' understandings of the interrelationships of people worldwide, thereby preparing students to participate meaningfully as global citizens' (Crawford and Kirby, 2008). Online environments lend themselves to instituting a genuine process of knowledge exchange and construction which requires the students to negotiate, construct and reconstruct new meanings, ideas and perceptions coming from themselves and their peers (Mayordomo and Onrubia, 2015). It is important that the pedagogical tasks are devised carefully so that opportunities for critical and creative thinking are enhanced instead of being stifled. It seems

open-ended tasks that necessitate divergent thinking and approaching problems from multiple perspectives, embracing ambiguity and avoiding premature closure (Daly et al., 2014) may be better suited to facilitating peer learning and teaching, including processes of knowledge exchange and review during which students' individual strengths come to the fore. If the focus shifts to the development of such skills, the reciprocity could be maintained within an extended definition of telecollaboration, as an online intercultural exchange, whereby 'intercultural' refers to the combination of global and local culture.

Foundations for the project – EAST 1

Every summer English for Academic Study (EAS) at the University of Glasgow runs an intensive EAP/ESAP course for incoming international postgraduate students wanting to study subject-specific disciplines, across a range of fields. The assessment criteria regarding the end-of-course written assignment comprise a selection of categories, such as task achievement, organisation, use of sources, language range and accuracy, style and, in the case of the presentation, presenting skills. Marks for the final product, both the essay and the presentation, feed into the final grade, which decides whether the student gains an entry onto their PG course or not. In the years up to and including summer 2014, in order to progress onto their master's or PhD programmes, students on the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) strand had to produce individually a written assignment and an oral presentation investigating an engineering problem of their choosing, and evaluating a range of responses. Although peer discussions of the progress milestones, such as the essay plan, its first and final drafts, the presentation outline and slides, were integrated into the class contact hours at regular intervals, the students mostly worked in solitude and relied on formative comments from their tutors. Tutor feedback was provided in both written and oral form, as essay annotations, a written summary of strengths and areas of improvement, and during a face-to-face tutorial.

In August 2015, an online collaboration with IUG was piloted, the EAS Telecollaboration project (<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>), henceforth referred to as EAST 1, which allowed several significant developments. During the project, 20 Palestinian students and 37 UK-based international students were teamed up to form small research groups. The majority of the former were already studying on a master's course at IUG in electrical engineering, information technology or environmental sciences, many already at the

dissertation stage. Their English was assessed through an in-house test and was deemed adequate to allow them to participate actively in an international exchange project. The students in Glasgow represented a range of nationalities (Chinese, Brazilian, Saudi, Libyan, Thai, Italian) and prospective disciplines (electrical engineering, geology, statistics, physics, mechanical engineering). Most of them intended to progress onto a postgraduate course, with a small percentage transferring into an exchange programme for undergraduates. The transnational groups worked together on authentic and highly contextualised SET-related scenarios from the Gaza Strip, devised by the Palestinian students, for instance: Toxicity of organic chemicals (pesticides, detergents, antibiotics); Optical character recognition for Arabic; Wastewater treatment and electricity shortages. Apart from submitting an engineering problem, the role of the IUG participants was to brief their partners on the context by providing factual background information (often starting by outlining the challenges faced by Gaza due to its political predicament) and pointing to relevant sources, for example news and government reports. However, the bulk of their guidance was to provide content-oriented comments throughout the project. They were to act as ‘abler’ peers or ‘critical friends’, being direct witnesses to the problem and having more expertise in the discipline. Taking on this mentoring role was facilitated through an intensive preparatory course in constructive feedback - see <https://goo.gl/ifxdh7> - delivered to the IUG students online and prior to the commencement of the pre-sessional course. Based on the guidance from their peer mentors, the students in Glasgow analysed and evaluated possible solutions. At the end of the project, they submitted individual essays and delivered group presentations to the audience in Gaza via a videoconference link which again provided feedback and questions for the presenters. Throughout the project the students worked with each other using a range of online tools to communicate, the main one being closed Facebook groups, set up and monitored by EAS staff. Facebook presents possible drawbacks when it comes to security, safety, and the potential blurring between private and academic aspects of life, but ease of use and familiarity with the tool were obvious advantages, and the Gazan students in particular had already used the social network extensively during their previous studies. Facebook is easily accessed on smartphones and other mobile devices, which makes it a flexible and responsive choice, an important feature for busy students, particularly students working across borders and time zones, who have to account for daily power cuts too. Using a university-supported platform, such as the UoG Moodle, would have been less convenient as the tool is not so mobile-friendly and securing access for non-University of Glasgow learners is a lengthy process.

The EAST 1 project was evaluated highly. In an end-of-project survey, with an 81% rate of completion, the students from both institutions commented on the range of positive outcomes of the participation, for example language practice, development of transferrable skills and enhancement of content knowledge, including the knowledge of real-life subject-specific problems (for a detailed analysis of this project, see Guariento et al., 2016). It was felt, though, that there had been an imbalance in benefits between the two institutions, resulting in unevenly distributed learning outcomes across the groups of students, both in terms of quantity and qualitative weight, an observation made by both the organisers and participants. Since the project was so embedded into a high-stakes pre-sessional course, the immediate and unparalleled advantage for the Glasgow-based students would be the continuation of their study on postgraduate courses. This opportunity could not be offered to the students in Gaza, due to lack of resources needed to bring them over to the UK or to organise an equivalent provision of input and practice online. In their case, the focus of the learning outcomes was shifted to the development of transferable skills in order to address the issue of increasing unemployment rate among the science and engineering graduates in Gaza. It was hoped that engagement in a telecollaborative project, as well as a prior constructive feedback course, would help them acquire a skillset needed in distributed working environments, thus enhancing their employability and employment options.

However, could their engagement in the project could be extended *beyond* the role of mentors assigned to them in EAST1, to include for example active participation in researching the literature and analysing the evidence, leading to producing an academic assignment and a presentation? We felt that the principle of reciprocity, stipulated by Appel and Mullen (2000) as the prerequisite for successful tele-collaboration, could be better satisfied if the Palestinian students were able to work in full partnership with their counterparts in the UK, taking on a role of co-researchers, co-writers and co-producers. This increased involvement would also introduce better opportunities for exchanging reciprocal peer feedback as recommended by Nicol (2011). A modification along similar lines was suggested by some of the UoG student-participants in focus groups held at the end of the project; a more substantial contribution from the IUG participants would have made the collaboration more engaging, they felt, and would have been worth implementing despite the obvious challenges. Combining our review of the literature with our own and students' observations, we decided to modify the format of the project so that the positive outcomes for UoG students were maintained while those for

the IUG partners were enhanced; this considerable change formed the foundations of the EAST 2 project (and the ELTRA application) in 2016.

Project Re-Iteration and Re-Design – EAST 2

The ELTRA-funded EAST 2 project run in summer 2016 aimed to address the gaps outlined in the previous section, by making changes to the pedagogic design of the tele-collaboration as well as administration of the project.

In terms of the redesign, the project experimented with the nature of the student partnerships. Alongside the vertically-structured mentor-mentee relationships within the SET cohort as in the previous year, we established a parallel and more horizontally-structured partnership between biomedical students who would be working as co-researchers, thus increasing the reciprocity of the relationship and hopefully ensuring a more equal distribution of benefits. The biomedical sciences were chosen deliberately, as the Gazan students representing this discipline have a strong academic record and high English language proficiency. Their immediate needs, however, differ from those of the SET students. Their access to the job market is less problematic and so development of e-working skills is for them less of a priority. What they need, however, is the ability to effectively communicate subject knowledge in English so that they remain academically and professionally competitive. For this reason, a more horizontal partnership-structure seemed more appropriate.

Logistically, in summer 2016, the SET participants from IUG received pre-course training in constructive-feedback techniques, just as was the case for EAST1 and, as mentors, continued to provide only content-input to their international partners in Glasgow. The biomedical students from IUG, on the other hand, in teams with UK-based students, were tasked with researching particular aspects of a wider medical problem. For instance, the overarching theme could be chronic diseases and within it each team member had to identify a unique aspect to work on throughout the project, for example a particular type of a chronic disease or treatment of chronic diseases in their country. Even though each student was to carry out individual research they had to remain in close contact with their research group members in order to share general background knowledge of the generic theme and consult each other on the particulars of their unique subtheme, thus essentially providing ongoing peer feedback. The individual jigsaw pieces were brought together in the final presentation delivered by the

whole group, including Gazan partners presenting live through a video-conference link-up or (in some cases) by means of a short video prepared and sent to the UK prior to the presentation. Each UoG student had to produce an individual assignment, part of the pre-session courses summative assessment, but each Gazan student also wrote a short report which summarised the findings of their research. Both outputs from the IUG students were given joint language and content feedback from EAP tutors at EAS and teaching assistants from the School of Medicine, respectively. While staff within EAS was able to absorb the costs for providing language feedback to IUG participants, funding was needed to pay the medical staff to comment on the more technical aspects of the students' work, an indispensable element for this more 'horizontal' relationship to work well.

Administratively, we proposed the employment of an IUG-based teaching assistant to set up and monitor Facebook groups for the Biomed and SET courses. Our experience from the EAST 1 project showed that administration was time-intensive; beyond setting up the Facebook sub-groups, ensuring that participants communicated effectively with their counterparts in Scotland required regular monitoring and reminders, which would, we felt, have been far more effective from a source on the ground in Gaza. We recruited a previous EAST 1 participant, as experience of participation was desirable, alongside proven task and time-management skills, language proficiency and familiarity with technologies to support learning and teaching. Beyond paying for the administrative demands of a course taking place outwith IUG's academic year, funding was principally necessary to pay this teaching assistant.

In summary, we were proposing parallel courses, with differing partnership structures, each offering an incentive for the IUG students that would attempt to respond to their particular needs and circumstances; the incentive for the IUG participants within the SET course was principally provided by the pre-course training in offering constructive feedback, while the incentive for the IUG participants within the Biomed course was principally derived from the feedback that they would receive on their own (written and spoken) output.

During EAST 2 we investigated the effect of the nature of these differing relationships on the development of academia- and workplace-related skills as well as peer feedback provision and its impact on the students' development, by using quantitative and qualitative methods in the form of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and post-course interviews with the

medical teaching assistants. The questionnaires were handed out to the students prior to project, to investigate their perceptions and understandings of learning and working in partnerships, and their value to development of language, study and transferrable skills as well as content knowledge. Another survey was handed out after the project to evaluate the perceptions of impact of the project on the students' learning, and selected participants were invited to interview, to enable a deeper analysis.

So far, we have outlined our general motivation for EAST 2. In the next section, we will outline our hopes, expectations and findings in detail, starting with the University of Glasgow, and moving on to the Islamic University of Gaza.

EAST 2: An overview of hopes and expectations for the student-participants

Uppermost in pre-sessional students' minds is, without doubt, tangible improvement in language skills, and the pursuit of an IELTS-equivalent score that will permit entry to their university course, with perhaps a particular preoccupation with the productive skills. Input in EAP writing skills and subskills (rhetorical moves, referencing rules, avoidance of plagiarism, basic grammar, academic lexis) has not changed for many years on our pre-sessional courses, nor did it change for EAST 1 or EAST 2 – as before, practice in this core skill was provided by trained and experienced EAP tutors, in dedicated writing sessions. The EAST collaboration with IUG now allows UoG students to collaborate with a partner at UoG and two partners at IUG in the gathering of data, but the write-up for UoG students, whether SET or Biomed, remains an individual task (as it must, given the gatekeeping function of the pre-sessional course). We were thus not expecting any significant improvement in the accuracy of the students' writing, and in fact wondered whether the content might if anything be harder for the UoG students to assimilate, particularly in the first instance, as many would be working in areas at best tangentially linked to their own areas of interest or previous experience; the need to pair up with IUG students meant, perforce, a need to compromise regarding research topic. In terms of oral development, we had hopes for a continued advantage over pre-EAST practice, when students worked alone on projects and gained speaking practice merely via their end-of-project presentation. Compared with EAST 1, we anticipated greater interaction between Biomed students in Scotland and Gaza during EAST 2, given the final week's summary reports and oral presentations by IUG students – a motivational incentive for increased Palestinian involvement absent from the SET

partnerings. Overall, though, language improvement, while clearly salient for the students, was probably not the key hope for the organisers.

An obvious focus was on the centrality of technologies to the EAST set-up, and the strength of the project in these terms was stressed from day one. A variety of platforms were used by tutors during the course – Facebook, Googledocs, Skype and Wiziq, alongside the final teleconferenced presentations – and students themselves adopted others. But our expectations were of already technologically-savvy SET and Biomed cohorts, and again this was not a key driver for either institution.

The expected learning-outcome for the UoG students was less in terms of traditional language development or technological abilities, than of the need to adapt both language and technology as available to best meet real-world needs and the time-bound nature of the tasks inherent in the coursework and the collaboration with partners – this is where we start to move to the less overt but (we felt) potentially far more weighty benefits of EAST 2. We knew already from EAST 1 that a two-hour time difference and regular power cuts in Gaza would add significantly to any challenges, bringing with it the need to find alternative means of communication. Here, the frustrations of students hoping for clarification from a partner, unable to obtain data and/or anxious for updates may be perceived initially as being technological at root, but they were in fact related to more fundamental issues, namely team-working and problem-solving (the ‘graduate attributes’ we mention earlier). EAST 1 received positive feedback in terms of team-working and problem-solving and we expected the increased collaboration inherent in the Biomed pairings on EAST 2 to result in a similar, if not further enhanced, rating by participants.

A final and key anticipated benefit of EAST 2 was that of increased cultural awareness among the UoG cohort. Students on pre-sessional courses always need to work alongside students of other nationalities with whom contacts may previously have been limited or non-existent, regardless of any link-up with an overseas institution. It may not be perceived as such initially, as the possibilities for misunderstanding are well-documented, but the future of the English language is ever-increasingly likely to be one of NNS-NNS contact (Saraceni, 2015: 45), thus an ability to accommodate to and even embrace the challenges brought by diversity can only enhance the likely success of any given communicative act, and again, this is an importance acknowledged by the graduate attributes on the university websites. We

were curious to investigate the extent to which the SET and Biomed students at UoG would appreciate the possibilities inherent in collaboration with a student/students from a very different cultural background, and in particular the more ‘invested’ nature of the IUG contribution to the Biomed project.

The expected learning outcomes for IUG students were similar to the expected outcomes for UoG students but can and should be discussed from a different contextual perspective. The Palestinian context in Gaza is one of challenge, pressure and pain due to the ongoing siege imposed by Israel since 2007 and actual damage / destruction of IUG infrastructure in 2009 and 2014.

Consequently, these students have to face a number of problems on a daily basis that often exert adverse impact on their academic performance and prospects. Some of these challenges include frequent power cuts affecting internet access, which in turn often exacerbates the completion of academic tasks and assignments as well as online communication with international partners; immobility for academic purposes; high rate of unemployment among university graduates (58% among young people, with 42% of the total population now struggling to earn a living, according to the 2016 World Bank Report); and deprivation of face-to-face communication with any international students representing non-Gazan cultural and educational backgrounds.

However, having no other choices to solve these problems beyond a determination to persevere and motivation to engage in intercultural exchange with international teams, the Palestinian IUG students were expected to participate actively in EAST 2, as witnessed in the first run of the project in summer 2015, as well as the high number of applicants. EAST 2 was built on the full understanding of this context and the qualities of these students, knowing that higher education in general and English language skills in particular are prerequisites to overcoming these problems. Developing the IUG students’ academic and professional oral and written communication skills in English strengthens their hope of obtaining a postgraduate scholarship in the UK or universities that use English as a medium of instruction. At the same time, it enhances their chances of finding work in a job market characterised by very high levels of unemployment.

It was hoped that by providing Gaza students with opportunities to use a variety of recent digital tools, such as Facebook, Skype, Googledocs and Wiziq, EAST 2 would not only help them to develop their skills in using technologies to cross their country's closed borders but also would open a vital academic opportunity for them to meet and exchange academic skills and experiences with international students at UoG. Communicating with international students would support these physically isolated students in practising English in real academic situations and producing academic texts as well as using English in everyday contexts.

It was also expected that EAST 2 would enable these Palestinian students to practise the skills of working in specialised teams composed of local and international colleagues to academically explore possible solutions to the SET- and Biomedicine-related problems facing Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Going through such an experience had the potential to help the Palestinian students strengthen their confidence and faith in themselves, their university, and (reciprocally) the faith of the international community in them.

Finally, enhanced intercultural understanding was a very significant driver for the IUG partner, just as it was for participants at UoG; the vital role of projects that bring people of different races and religions together, across geographical boundaries was suggested by EAST1, and it was hoped that EAST2 would enhance these often intangible, yet absolutely vital, intercultural benefits.

In brief, the Palestinian partner believed that EAST 2 would fill a needed gap in the Gazan context allowing highly motivated young male and female students by an opportunity to develop academic communication skills via tele-collaboration with international students at a prestigious British university.

Summarising the expected benefits for students at UoG and IUG, if a greater understanding of the value of inter-cultural communication could be achieved for students at both institutions, and an awareness of the value of problem-solving, while maintaining the skills development needed for the UoG participants to ensure high progression rates to their Masters courses, EAST 2 could (we felt) be deemed a worthwhile development of EAST 1.

We will now move on to examine what EAST2 actually achieved, and where challenges remain to be overcome.

A comparison of SET data from UoG and IUG

This section looks in detail at the SET and the Biomed data separately, beginning with an analysis of questionnaires given to respective discipline cohorts at both institutions, pre- and post-project.

The SET cohort demographics

52 students comprised the SET cohort in EAST 2, of whom 31 were from UoG (60%) and 21 from IUG (40%). The response rate to the survey was 100% by UoG students, but only 48% by IUG students. This is naturally a limitation, one which will be discussed further below, but despite the Gazans being underrepresented in the survey, some useful patterns emerge.

In terms of demographics, the Glasgow-based group was predominantly male (only 23% were women), in their early 20s, and from China; the other nationalities were Syrians and Thais (two students each), a Saudi and a Kazakh. Most of them intended to continue their studies at the postgraduate level but there were also 4 undergraduates in the group. In terms of the disciplines they planned to specialise in, there was a strong group of statisticians and data scientists (9 students), followed by engineers (civil, electric and mechanical) and individuals wanting to study chemistry, mathematics, computer science, and sensor and imaging systems. Among the Palestinians, there were more females (60% of the respondents, and a preponderance confirmed by the project registration data), and the students were generally older, namely in their late 20s and early 30s. According to the registration data, most had engineering as their major, with specialisations in architectural, computer, electrical, civil, environmental and industrial engineering. The architectural engineering was a strongly represented discipline in the 2016 iteration of the project (also in the survey, with 40% respondents), unlike in 2015 when no prospective architects were present. This was reflected in the choices of scenarios, many of which looked at the use of urban space, inclusion of green spaces and the idea of smart cities.

Before EAST 2 began – SET students' experience and perceptions of confidence

The questionnaire consisted of several multiple-choice questions asking the respondents about their experience with collaborating face-to-face and online and with the assistance of

technology. It also covered their perceptions of the level of comfort with particular activities and behaviours, such as communicating in English via technologies, team working, problem solving, digital literacies and peer feedback provision. Some of the questions were accompanied by the option of providing more information in order to elicit details of the students' experience.

The questionnaire showed a significant disparity between the institutions when it comes to collaboration. 80% of IUG respondents registered previous experience of collaborating with others, compared to 52% of UoG students, and 60% at IUG (compared to just 16%) declared themselves to be 'very confident' in team-working. The qualitative comments in this regard indicated that the team working projects UoG students had been involved in were rather small-scale and/or informal, with the face-to-face group project as part of the Supported Independent Study part of the year-round pre-session course being the most frequently cited example. The examples provided by the IUG counterparts were more impressive and pointed to higher levels of responsibility, organisation, visibility and professionalism. They were real projects with actual impact on internal and external stakeholders, rather than trials which simply allowed the students to play at being collaborators and researchers. For instance, one IUG student had participated in the Hult Prize project, 'a start-up accelerator for budding young social entrepreneurs emerging from the world's universities' (<http://www.hultprize.org/>), which engages youth from all over the world in locating innovative solutions to the world problems. Other examples included groupwork in design studios or working as a manager of housing unit department which required high levels of collaboration and co-ordination of teamwork. Further, 40% of IUG respondents also noted some experience of distance collaboration, compared to just 16% of UoG students. Again, some of the actual examples of online teamwork were high-profile, such as MENA Leader for Change Program, 'a unique regional leadership program that took place 2012-14 in partnership with the U.S. State Department' (<http://yalayl.org/yala-academy/>).

Unsurprisingly (given their field of study), more than 80% of each group declared themselves to be 'digitally literate' but it seems the students, particularly from the UoG cohort, understand the term of literacies in its basic meaning as purely technical skills involving familiarity with hardware and software rather than cognitive skills required to succeed in online environments such as sifting, critically evaluating and processing vast amounts of information. This interpretation is corroborated by the answers to the questions regarding the

use of technology in facilitating group project or communicating in English. While 60% of IUG respondents noted some previous experience of using technology to facilitate group projects, whether within or outwith Gaza, for 55% of UoG participants in the SET cohort this was their first experience of a technology-enabled group project. Moving on to a language-related issue, 40% of IUG respondents felt 'very confident' in combining technology and the English language in order to communicate; not one of the 31 UoG students answered in this way.

Finally, in terms of cross-cultural awareness, 70% of each group declared themselves to be 'very' or 'quite' comfortable, probably an expected result considering the contextual factors. The UoG international students by definition become part of a different culture for the duration of their studies and a degree of cross-cultural awareness and openness to integration may help them thrive in the foreign environment. The Palestinian students being physically confined within their country are motivated to seek contact with the international community and so adequate language skills and knowledge of cultures is key in facilitating their success in this respect.

Overall, the obvious picture before EAST 2 began shows SET students from IUG reporting a greater level of experience and confidence when it comes to working alongside others and by means of technology. Apart from indicating the individual IUG students' enthusiasm, ambitions and commitment to academic and professional advancement as an opportunity to better themselves and improve their prospects, this outcome can be almost certainly attributed to contextual factors, most notably a blockade which has obliged Gazans to exploit to the full digital means of contacting the wider world. A related academic factor is the emphasis of the Palestinian universities on adopting recent technologies to enhance the process of teaching and learning as well as to communicate with international universities to overcome the resultant immobility in and out of Gaza (Aouragh, 2011) IUG is a leading Palestinian university in this field and it has prioritised setting up and developing good-quality IT and ICT facilities, including free Wi-Fi connection across the campus, several well-equipped VC halls, a Moodle virtual learning environment, and a pro WizIQ licence which allows delivery of synchronous online classes and training workshops (<https://www.wiziq.com/>). A societal factor to consider too is a high level of literacy among the Gazan population, at 96.8% (UNDP, 2014), as well as the fact that almost every Palestinian family living in Gaza has some close relatives living in the diaspora. These families need to use technologies and

available social media to stay up-to-date with the news and to communicate with their family members as conveniently, flexibly and cheaply as possible.

After EAST 2 finished – SET students’ evaluation of the project impact on their learning

Post-project, the data returned by SET participants offers several clear indications (although the limitations related to the low response rate have to be taken into account when interpreting the data).

‘General academic development’ (Table 1), an all-encompassing category, was rated as ‘very useful’ by 61% of the respondents and as ‘quite useful’ by almost 27%, which matches the corresponding figures from 2015 (67% and 30% respectively). Broken down into separate results for each institution, there was a visible disparity in the students’ perceptions of the usefulness of the project. 55% at UoG opted for the highest rank, which is considerably lower than the 80% from IUG. There seems to be a clear signalling of satisfaction with the project as a whole, with the value being particularly recognized among the students from Gaza, which is different from 2015 when the satisfaction rankings were distributed across the two institutions more equally (67% and 58% respectively). This may be due to the changes introduced to the constructive feedback course, thanks to which the IUG students had received more input and opportunities of practice and/or the second reiteration of the project within IUG having received increased recognition. However, the small response rate among the IUG students has to be remembered and the fact that it is likely that it is the more ambitious and driven students in Gaza who filled in the questionnaire.

Table 1 Evaluation of the project in terms of general academic development (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	61	54.8	80
Quite	26.8	35.5	0
A little	7.3	3.2	20
Rather not	4.9	6.5	0

The following categories were rated as ‘very useful’ by over 50% of respondents at both UoG and at IUG: ‘developing team-working skills’ (Table 2), ‘developing problem-solving skills’

(Table 3), ‘developing knowledge of real-life issues’ (Table 4) and ‘developing cross-cultural awareness’ (Table 5).

Table 2 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing team-working skills (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	56.1	54.8	60
Quite	36.6	38.7	30
A little	4.9	3.2	10
Rather not	2.4	3.2	10

Table 3 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing problem-solving skills (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	53.7	51.6	60
Quite	39	41.9	30
A little	4.9	6.5	0
Rather not	2.4	0	10

Table 4 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing knowledge of real-life issues (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	56.1	54.8	60
Quite	34.1	38.7	20
A little	7.3	6.5	10
Rather not	2.4	0	10

Table 5 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing cross-cultural awareness (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	65.9	67.7	60
Quite	26.8	25.8	30
A little	7.3	6.4	10
Rather not	0	0	0

There appears to have been a general awareness that the outcome had in some way mirrored experiences likely in future employment, despite students having to pool knowledge and information in order to overcome the frequent obstacles accompanying a time-bound online course with strangers and power-outages (or, as we will contend in our conclusion, perhaps *because of* these factors). We feel that students' understanding of 'real-life issues' may have varied between an 'understanding of the problems facing people in areas of conflict', and 'an understanding of likely work-related challenges'; our intention was the former, but perhaps the question should have been worded less ambiguously.

The open comments from the respondents provide some insight into the evaluation of the impact. For example, in relation to the development of team-working skills, one UoG student noted that 'Working with group often involves disagreement between team-mates and this can teach us how we deal with different opinions', echoed by an IUG partner who explained the impact in this way: *'Yes, being in contact with my group members and trying to be solution focused and acknowledge each other about our works and appreciate it that's absolutely sharpening our team work skills'*. However, most of the answers tended to be descriptive, focusing on how the students had approached the collaboration in practical terms instead of elaborating on the extent of the impact. While this still provides useful information, it shows the importance of careful instructions when handing out a survey to students. One IUG student commented on the need to adjust individual working/learning preferences and align individual goals with those of the whole group: *'I had been exercising myself to present any piece of work as a group work not my own work; even if I performed more than my partner, and also speaking on behalf of my group'* while another pointed at the added value of doing the teamwork online as opposed to face-to-face. Some other insights regarding collaboration are also included in the section concerning communication skills (below) as these two aspects of working together online are closely inter-related. Regarding the problem-solving skills, a couple of UoG students hinted at the necessity of developing a related skill, that of critical thinking; one student noted that *'Finding solutions is quite easy but the difficult thing is finding viable solutions'*. An IUG student, whose group worked on the topic of smart cities, explains in more detail what strategies the teams used in order to overcome the problems they encountered: *'[it] gave us a chance to search in-depth about suggested solution for such a new and recent technology. For example, we tried to consult some experts in this field to know more valuable solution and for additional advice*

and help, which certainly improve our problem-solving skills'. But the range of problems went well beyond those related to the subject matter of the research or even power shortages or intermittent connectivity. For one student, it was the partner's dwindling motivation that they had to deal with in order to keep working as a group: *'when my partner told me that she decided to quit and she is no longer can participate in the project. I tried to solve the problem she is feeling and kept encourage her and pushing her to continue*'.

And lastly, in terms of knowledge of real-life issues, the comments were less revealing than had been the case in the previous iteration of the project. In 2015 the students, particularly from UoG were very explicit about the value of working on problems that do not come from textbooks but instead are real and experienced by people actually familiar to them. In 2016 the gains in that respect were articulated less enthusiastically and in more general terms: *'Applying what we learn in real life enables us to clearly understand the problems in our life*'. As mentioned earlier, there was an implicit assumption that it would be the Scotland-based students who would benefit most in regard to becoming familiar with the cruel reality of conflict-stricken areas. However, the experience proved equally instructive for some of the IUG students. For instance, one of them confessed: *'you will get astonished when you hear that i have learned many thing about the problems of my countries that i have never known it is existing*'.

A point of interest is that there was only one category rated higher by UoG respondents than by those at IUG, 'developing cross-cultural awareness'; 68% of UoG students returned a 'very useful' rating, compared to 60% at IUG; as Kramsch (1998) points out, the word 'culture' is of course open to a variety of interpretations, but could it be that this was, for the great majority of the students at UoG, their first contact with a group from a poorer country than their own, certainly for many a first contact with a group of Muslim students, even (for the more informed) their first contact with a group from Gaza, an area often reported on with inaccuracy by a partisan press? Though we cannot know for sure, this is one explanation. The open comments from the students are again quite general but they reveal how the students perceive the value of cross-cultural contacts and what strategies they use in order to enhance the impact. For example, one of the UoG students commented that *'[cross-cultural awareness] helps us to know how the others think and that develops our thinking*' while another observed that it is important to know more about differences in culture and customs and so *'before communication, [they] generally did some work of knowing their custom*

which was helpful to our communication'. The IUG students also commented on appreciating the cultural differences and learning from them as this kind of knowledge *'really unites us as humans'*.

There were two areas in which UoG participants noted a positive, yet less marked, response to the course at its end; 45% returned a 'very useful' rating for 'developing digital literacies' (compared to 60% at IUG) (Table 6), and 48% for 'developing communication skills' (compared to 70%) (Table 7).

Table 6 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing digital literacies (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	48.8	45.2	60
Quite	39	45.2	20
A little	7.3	3.2	20
Rather not	4.9	6.4	0

Table 7 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing communication skills (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	53.7	48.4	70
Quite	26.8	32.2	10
A little	17.1	16.2	20
Rather not	2.4	3.2	0

The figure for the former category seems unsurprising, given the high percentage of students who declared themselves to be digitally-savvy on arrival, and is aligned with the results from the previous year. However, the caveat discussed earlier has to be remembered: it is not clear what the students understand by the term of digital literacies. When analysing some of the open comments regarding the use of technology to facilitate the telecollaboration, one can conclude that some students had made informed choices when opting for particular technological tools. For example, they considered the ease of use, accessibility and familiarity when deciding to use Facebook or Whatsapp to communicate with each other. They also distinguished between different functionalities of the tools in order to support

various types of communication; for instance, they thought the Facebook group wall lent itself better to breaking the ice, getting to know each other and so building a relationship, while the integrated group messaging system was better for exchanging ideas in such a way that each team member could access them no matter when they logged in. They thought that composing Facebook posts aided reflection and careful consideration of ideas and supported the development of writing skills, whereas Skype not only allowed them to deepen the working relationship but also to exchange ideas rapidly and practise fluency in speaking English.

The use of technologies during the project work involved facing and dealing with a number of issues, which was covered by a separate question. The biggest challenge was related to time in general terms, which featured in 10 out of the total of 21 responses. The students struggled in that respect due to working across different time zones and/or different working day/weekend patterns at each institution. This resulted in longer waiting times (when rapid responses were desired) due to time pressures imposed by, for example, assessment. The time difference was a particular problem when trying to arrange for meet-ups in real time, using synchronous tools such as Skype. Another difficulty was created by power shortages in Gaza and problems with connectivity (mentioned by 8 students) and, lastly, the third most-common problem was related to communication, mainly resulting from language and culture differences.

The students resorted to different strategies to solve such issues, which sheds more light onto their problem-solving capabilities. While waiting for their partners to respond, the UoG students remained independent and pro-active in seeking additional information and sources. They readjusted their timetables and agreed to work at less sociable times, for example at weekends and/or at night. They sent reminders to each other and in the worst-case scenario they asked the tutor to intervene. To ensure better connectivity, the Gazan students congregated in places with more reliable Internet access, such as the University or restaurants. To facilitate the communication, the students attended to meaning to ascertain their partner had a clear understanding of the message. This required using Google translator or other online dictionaries to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words, and (of course) patience.

The figures relating to the impact of the project on the development of communication skills is of interest when compared to the higher figures for ‘problem-solving’ and ‘team-working’; difficulties in making themselves understood seem to have been of particular salience to UoG participants. Similarly to culture, communication is a broad term and may encompass a number of aspects such as communication online, cross-cultural communication or inter-group communication, not to mention the fact that in the context of the project it overlaps with other skills discussed earlier like problem-solving or teamworking. The open comments from the students reflect the ambiguity of the term. As before some of the students just commented on the mechanics of communication, for example the frequency of contact, or having to restrict themselves to English as the medium, but some noted some more interesting issues, such as raising sensitive topics (*‘At the beginning, I didn’t know much about Gaza. So I was very careful to talk about some sensitive issues like wars with them’*), use of online-speak (*‘Some English online chat language I don’t know before, for example, ppl means people, haha’*) and multiplicity of opinions and perspectives. One of the IUG students took the latter further and associated seeing a problem from other points of view with the development of empathy. Another student focused on the importance of asking questions in order to ensure full comprehension, which is linked with the need for confidence, something which IUG students more often emphasised in their comments. One student described their experience as follows: *‘The project encourages me a lot to communicate effectively, not hesitate to ask questions or even being frightened from the new experience in which you interact with people you can’t see them or see their facial expressions! I learnt how it is important to response/ react quickly without delay, in order to keep the confidence between partners. Actually, it is very important to ask questions to confirm that their point has been understood. And also to listen well’*. Another student confessed: *‘before the EAST project i was not have the courage to communicate and speak loudly in English. but after the East project, i am now speaking confidently and without any shyness’*.

A final post-project question regarded ‘developing specialist knowledge’ (Table 8). The responses for both institutions were again positive, but less so, only 40% at each returning ‘very useful’; we will look in more detail at possible reasons for this in Section 8, but it seems that expectations were not met in all cases, and some students may have struggled with topics related only tangentially to their coming fields of study.

Table 8 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing specialist knowledge (EAST 2, SET)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	41.5	41.9	40
Quite	31.7	29	40
A little	24.4	25.8	20
Rather not	2.4	3.2	0

Before moving on to examine the responses of the Biomed cohort, questions relating to SET students specific to UoG, or to IUG, should be examined.

Those at UoG were asked to evaluate the project in terms of ‘producing the subject-specific essay’, ‘preparing for and delivering the final presentation’, and ‘feedback provided by IUG’ (areas irrelevant to the IUG students within the SET cohort) (Table 9). The ‘very/quite useful’ responses descended from (respectively) 71%, through 58%, to 55%; in summary, though the evaluation was again positive overall in all cases, feedback seems to have been perceived as having more obvious benefit to the written output of UoG students (which may reflect the emphasis that teachers placed, throughout the five weeks of the project, on this output). There were only a couple of open comments regarding the impact of the project on producing the final presentation, one identifying marked improvement and another one stating the opposite, with the reason being related to time.

Quite a few students commented ‘little’ or gave no answer re: the usefulness of IUG feedback. There was one open comment saying IUG didn’t seem to know what they are supposed to do, something we need to address in any future iterations of EAST (and which we will come back to in our conclusion).

Table 9 Evaluation of the project in regard to producing the essay and final presentation as well as of feedback from IUG – UoG only (EAST2, SET)

	SSE	Presentation	Feedback from IUG
Very	45.2	35.5	25.8
Quite	25.8	22.6	29
A little	12.9	9.65	22.6
Rather not	0	9.65	0

No answers	16.1	22.6	22.6
------------	------	------	------

Those at IUG were asked to evaluate EAST2 in terms of ‘developing your constructive feedback skills’ (an area irrelevant to the UoG students, who hadn’t received this pre-course training) (Table 10). 80% of respondents reported that it was ‘very useful’. Two of the students explained this as follows: *‘Definitely the constructive feedback was the most important skills that we all gain through variety of strategy, for example, how to be brief yet specific and I become more positive at first when giving my opinion and then the improvements points on an essay or any presentation’* and *‘I have no idea about the constructive feedback before or how to give it in it's right way. Here in this project, I have learned how to give a clear, positive, polite constructive feedback; how to encourage the writer and how to give him tips to develop his writing’*. This is a really gratifying response, and one which will certainly inform any future directions the project will take.

Table 10 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing constructive feedback provision skills – IUG only (EAST2, SET)

	IUG (%)
Very	80
Quite	20
A little	0
Rather not	0

The survey also finished with four open questions attempting to elicit subjective and more holistic gut responses from the students in regard to ‘the greatest thing about the project participation’, ‘the most challenging thing about the project participation’, ‘recommendation of what should be improved’ and whether the respondent would recommend the project participation to their friend. The answers to these questions were compulsory so the response rate was 100% for the student respondents from both institutions.

The UoG students appreciated the opportunity to gain new experience that helped them develop social and professional skills. In terms of the former, ten respondents explicitly pointed at the opportunity to make new friends as the main gain. Another 10 linked the social

aspect to multicultural collaboration and knowledge exchange. The remaining students focused on either the aspects of real-life problem-solving skills, or communication- and language-related skills, including critical thinking.

While the comments from the UoG respondents were mostly limited to a single aspect of the project participation, ie ‘the greatest thing’, those from IUG students were lengthier and more elaborate. However, most of them referred to similar aspects of the engagement in the project. Additionally, they included favourable comments regarding the opportunity to use technology to study and complete tasks as well as innovative methods of teaching and learning in more general terms. The following comment aptly summarises the Gazan students’ perspective: *‘Many things was really great in this success project, and I was excited by the way we learn I suppose it is an innovation methodology of gaining collection of integrated life skills academically and socially’*. Unsurprisingly, a couple of students explicitly referred to the development of constructive feedback provision skills. Three students referred to the Gazan context, the related limitations and the opportunity to increase the awareness of the conditions in Palestine: *‘For me the greatest thing is that our voice reach the world by let other people know about Gaza and I really surprised when student from UOG say that he did not hear about Gaza city. I am pleased that we show them Gaza which is the beauty, love and life’*; *‘also knowing that people in the other side of the world love us and also knowing a lot about us unlike what we were thinking’*; *‘Make others aware about Gaza and its possibilities, real-situation problems, and culture’*.

When it comes to the most challenging aspects, the students from the UoG found the communication with their Gazan partners particularly challenging – 11 respondents indicated it as the greatest challenge. Communication in the telecollaborative context is multi-faceted and complex, encompassing a number of issues beyond the mere language-related difficulties. The respondents pointed to time aspects (3), culture (2), distance collaboration (1) and team-working in general (1). Quite a substantial number of students complained about problems locating reliable information about Gaza and academically acceptable references (9 respondents), which resulted in inadequate understanding of the ‘unique’ situation or identifying ‘viable and sustainable solutions which can be applicable in Gaza’. Two students struggled with the project because of its lack of alignment with their major. The qualitative comments from the Gazan students also identified communication as the greatest challenge, particularly the need to use English as the communication medium and the

resulting necessity to translate unfamiliar words. Two students mentioned ‘breaking the ice’ at the initial stage of the project as the prerequisite for the effectiveness of the communication and collaboration. These issues were often exacerbated by the technology-related challenges, electricity shortages and schedule conflicts.

As for the recommendations of what could be improved, the recurrent theme seems to be related to the topic choice (mentioned by 8 students), communication (8 students) and scheduling issues (5 students). More specifically, the students suggested that there should be more topic choices, that they should be more specific, related to their subjects and/or jointly negotiated or self-selected instead of being simply imposed by the Gazan partners. While in general terms this is a worthwhile recommendation, giving the students more freedom may result in further time- and task-management issues as well as minimise one of the strengths of the project design, i.e. the requirement to work with a heavily restricted context, which is likely to push the students toward more innovative solutions. Similarly, the recommendation of establishing a specific schedule to ensure and facilitate frequent and timely collaboration with the partners seems of value at first glance but at the same time it uncovers lack of understanding of the project context and the issues resulting from the time difference, differing working day/weekend patterns, as well as the need to be able to work autonomously. Some students suggested a requirement for face-to-face communication. It is unclear whether they mean actual interaction in person when the interlocutors share the physical space or technology-mediated communication in real time, i.e. synchronous communication via virtual rooms, messenger systems and online telephony, which allow the user to chat via text, audio and/or video. This recommendation was actually made by the project organisers during the induction session, reinforced by a message from an EAST1 participant (who kindly agreed to contextualise the project on day one) and it seems that the students who had invested time, energy and effort into organising synchronous sessions benefitted greatly from them.

The comments from the IUG students echo the recommendations made by their Glasgow-based partners but they also include some new suggestions, such as ‘*Ensure the sustainability of collaboration by request an extra joint-research or press article*’; ‘*May be if we swap the role so IUG students give the presentation and UOG ask questions and giving feedback*’; ‘*I hope to contact with native speakers (British) in order to learn the appropriate English expressions*’.

Finally, a decided majority of the respondents from UoG would recommend the project participation to their friends. The main reasons given include the opportunity to solve real problems, communicate with international partners, and develop thinking strategies such as considering a problem from multiple perspectives. Three students were of a different opinion, one arguing that shy students may not benefit from the project as much as more sociable and confident peers, and the other two indicating considerable time investment and misalignment with the major as the main weaknesses. 9 out of 10 comments from Gaza were similarly enthusiastic: *‘it provide us with some tools to improve our English language in new and unique way’*; *‘Because I learn a lot from this project I would like for he/she to learn and thrive in digital society so the benefit may be revealed’*; *‘Of course yes, It is that experience which break the siege on Gaza, In a word it is great rich experience: Knowledge, Culture, science, shouldn't be missed’*; and *‘Yes off course, my friend who participated in the last year recommended me to register this year and I am really appreciate her because my skills improved through the project. So I will recommend participating to my other friends in the next project’*.

A comparison of Biomed data from UoG and IUG

The Biomed cohort demographics

44 students comprised the Biomed cohort in EAST2, of whom 24 were from UoG. Of the latter, there was again a strong preponderance of Chinese students, but a larger minority of Arabic speakers; only 25% of the UoG Biomed students were women (among the IUG cohort, 50% were female). At UoG, all students were postgraduate, while the IUG cohort included a small number of undergraduate students. The IUG Biomed students were a slightly older cohort, with more students in their mid- to late-twenties. The response rate to the survey was 100% by UoG students, but only 50% by IUG students, and this low return rate from IUG means that division of the IUG data in table form can only be of limited validity. Having acknowledged limitations linked to the lower response-rate from Gaza, many of the underlying trends mirror those already seen for the SET cohorts, and some interesting differences also emerge.

Before EAST 2 began – Biomed students’ experience and perceptions of confidence

Prior to EAST2, the Biomed students at UoG reported slightly more experience of collaboration in general than those at IUG, but slightly less experience of distance collaboration (75% reporting ‘none’, compared to 50% at IUG); once again, the latter is unsurprising, given the

near-impossibility of exit from the Gaza Strip (for this reason, any non-Gazan collaboration will perforce be at a distance; one respondent had collaborated for Doctors without Borders with Hong Kong, one with Jordan, and another on an Erasmus Mundus project in Malaysia). Regarding ‘communication in English via technologies’, ‘team-working’, ‘problem-solving’, and ‘digital literacies, UoG respondents appeared comfortable across the board, though 25% at UoG self-reported as feeling ‘rather uncomfortable’ in terms of digital literacies, i.e. they did not share the almost complete confidence of the SET cohort at UoG. At IUG, on the other hand, there was no apparent lack of confidence in using digital platforms: all respondents reported being ‘very’ or ‘quite’ comfortable, before EAST2 began. The response to the ‘cross-cultural awareness’ by students at both universities was interesting, two thirds at each institution reporting themselves to be ‘quite comfortable’; perhaps (as noted above) this reluctance to take a stand can be attributed to the nebulous nature of ‘culture’, or perhaps the students joining the project were genuinely unsure of their ability to prosper in interactions with those from other parts of the world.

After EAST 2 finished – Biomed students’ evaluation of the project impact on their learning

Beginning again with ‘general academic development’, the majority of respondents at both institutions found it ‘very’ or ‘quite’ useful, 42% of UoG Biomed students opting for a ‘very useful’ rating, and 60% of IUG Biomed students (a reminder of the remarkable 80% ‘very useful’ return for IUG SET students is worthwhile, though).

Table 11 Evaluation of the project in terms of general academic development (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	47.1	41.7	60
Quite	44.1	50	30
A little	2.9	0	10
Rather not	5.9	8.3	0

A preponderance of SET students at UoG had rated ‘team-working skills’ as ‘very useful’ post-project, and almost half of UoG Biomed students also felt this way, one noting: ‘*Some times we may have different understanding about the requirements, before I explain my view, I may try*

to change my position and think about why they have different opinion, and it is really help us understand each other effectively.’ Satisfaction among the IUG Biomed respondents, however, remained higher at 60%, and responses (from this smaller group) were interesting: *‘whenever brains increased,greater creativity’*. Another at IUG suggested that success was due to *‘every one in the team have one role’*, while a UoG respondent noted *‘When we have different ideals about the topic we will take a long time to make a decision’*, (two very different perspectives, both of which perhaps reveal a degree of category-overlap with the next question).

Table 12 Evaluation of the project in terms of team-working skills (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	47.1	10	60
Quite	44.1	50	30
A little	2.9	0	10
Rather not	5.9	8.3	0

For the development of ‘problem-solving skills’ and ‘communication skills’, there was a much more noticeable inversion of the ‘very useful’ and ‘quite useful’ returns among UoG students when compared to the SET, i.e. with less obvious satisfaction levels in the Biomed cohort, and this was mirrored by the IUG respondents. One IUG comment suggests their greater employment experience as a possible explanation for these slightly less positive results: *‘Im become very independent in my work inside hospital, I can solve any problem by analysing it’*. A UoG student noted the difficulty of reconciling differing interests, alluded to earlier: *‘because we study in different major, we all have different angle on topic’*, while another noted (as a challenge presented by the project) *‘to make others to agree with my opinions’*.

Table 13 Evaluation of the project in terms of problem-solving (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	32.4	29.2	40
Quite	58.8	58.3	60
A little	2.9	4.2	0

Rather not	5.9	8.3	0
------------	-----	-----	---

Table 14 Evaluation of the project in terms of communication skills (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	35.3	33.3	40
Quite	55.9	58.3	50
A little	2.9	0	10
Rather not	5.9	8.3	0

Satisfaction with enhancement of ‘digital literacies’ among the UoG respondents was again slightly less marked among Biomed students than among the SET cohort, though 32% of UoG students returned a ‘very useful’ rating and more than 50% returned a ‘quite useful’ rating. One UoG student left the following positive comment: *‘I feel more comfortable working with others at a distance....it was an eye-opener experience.’* 50% of IUG respondents felt the Biomed course had been ‘very useful’, the majority agreeing on a judicious mix of Facebook and WhatsApp. One student said that *‘One technology was enough for us..We could do everything using Facebook’*, while another differed, and provided detail: *‘Skype for weekly meeting for all the group. WhatsApp for follow up and instance advice for each member.’*

Table 15 Evaluation of the project in terms of digital literacies (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	32.4	25	50
Quite	50	54.2	40
A little	11.8	12.5	10
Rather not	5.9	8.3	0

Significantly lower numbers of the Biomed students at UoG returned a ‘very useful’ rating for ‘cross-cultural awareness’ when compared to the SET cohort (38%, compared to 78%), with a similar (though much less marked) difference in rating between SET and Biomed cohorts at IUG also discernible. There were relatively few open responses to this category, and one might posit a preference towards the labelling of any negative (or less than positive) attribute with anything other than a ‘cultural’ brush.

Table 16 Evaluation of the project in terms of cross-cultural awareness (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	38.2	37.5	40
Quite	52.9	50	60
A little	2.9	4.2	0
Rather not	5.9	8.3	0

Finally, in terms of ‘developing specialist knowledge’, we have seen that the SET students at UoG (though still clearly enthusiastic) ranked this as perhaps the least useful aspect of their course, a 42% ‘very useful’ rating, and this was even more marked among the UoG Biomed, only 35% of whom returned a ‘very useful’ rating, one noting ‘*about specific essay I did not get many help from others*’. In this category, the IUG Biomed seem to have found the research involved slightly more relevant to their field of study than did the SETs, 50% returning a ‘very useful’ rating.

Table 17 Evaluation of the project in terms of developing specialist knowledge (EAST 2, Biomed)

	Total (%)	UoG (%)	IUG (%)
Very	35.3	29.2	50
Quite	50	62.5	20
A little	8.8	0	30
Rather not	5.9	8.3	0

Though the small size of the IUG sample needs restating, we feel that the open comments from the Biomed respondents again provide some insight into the evaluation of the impact. We will now address questions relating specifically to elements of the Biomed course (absent from the SET course).

On the Biomed course, students at *both* UoG and IUG produced written work which received feedback; in the case of the UoG students, a 1,500-word subject-specific essay (mirroring that produced by the SET students); in the case of the Biomed students at IUG, a 750-word report. Likewise, Biomed students at *both* institutions contributed to shared final-week oral

presentations, receiving feedback (among the SET cohort, it was only the UoG students who received such feedback). Comments from the IUG Biomed students on feedback, whether for their written report or their oral presentation, were overwhelmingly positive; 70% in each case returned a 'very useful' rating. For the Biomed students at UoG, 29% rated their subject-specific essay as 'very useful', and 38% rated the production and delivery of their oral presentations in this way. We have already seen that 45% of SET students at UoG rated the production of the subject-specific essay as 'very useful', while 36% rated their oral presentations in this way. The enthusiasm for the receipt of feedback on the part of the IUG Biomed students is one of the clearest results of EAST2.

The Biomed survey, like the SET survey, finished with four open questions, attempting to elicit subjective and more holistic gut responses from the students.

When it comes to the question about the greatest aspect of the project, teamwork again emerged highly from this more open question, six of 22 UoG responses bearing on this topic. The social aspects (*'When I saw Gaza friends on screen, It's amazing!'*) of the project were also mentioned explicitly by five students, and the opportunity to enhance subject-specific knowledge by four, as was the opportunity to develop oral English skills. Communicating at a distance was chosen by three UoG students, and one comment was difficult to categorise, yet heartening: *'Borden my horizons and found my own weakness'*. IUG respondents' answers were longer, more complex, and therefore harder to categorise. Of 8 responses, three mentioned the social aspects, and two the opportunity to work beyond Gaza's borders, if only online. Two mentioned the kudos gained from collaboration with a prestigious university. Only one specifically mentioned the teleconferenced presentation, which was 'awesome', but overall there was a really positive flavour to the responses, and a feeling of multifaceted benefits (though the low number of responses again needs to be stated).

The next question, as before, was about the greatest challenge, and of 22 UoG responses, 7 mentioned issues related to 'time', though for some this appeared to mean the two-hour time difference, for others the difficulty of reaching their IUG partners. 5 mentioned language comprehension difficulties (though this may have been intra-team, i.e. between the UoG team members). Four mentioned teamwork as presenting challenges (*'We can't meet the compromise point'*; and *'time management between the team'*), though again it was unclear whether this was a cross-border issue. Only three UoG students specifically referred to the

technological difficulties facing their partners in Gaza, though two mentioned ‘distance’ as a problem, another example of an opaque category-overlap. Of 10 responses from IUG students, ‘time’ was again the category most frequently mentioned, with five participants noting this as a problem, and two specifying exactly why: *‘we have other things to do’*; *‘Time actually....we were very busy and the project needs attention’*. This we feel may have been a key reason for the low completion rate for Biomed students from IUG – they simply had more pressing outside commitments than the SET students in Gaza. One participant combined ‘time’ with another challenge in Gaza: *‘Electricity shortage was an obstacle whenever I have free time...’*, a problem mentioned by another with the lapidary *‘electricity’*.

In terms of recommendations, four UoG students felt that the EAST project could not be improved, but others had suggestions to make, all of which were interesting, and some of which might inform future iterations of EAST. Four students felt that some form of pre-project input regarding content and organisation would have been useful: *‘I spent amount of time to understand the project’*, a comment mirrored by one of the teaching assistants, which we will consider in our conclusion (only one introduction session was offered to the students as well as to the teaching assistants). Three would have liked longer, which (as noted already for the SET responses) might detract from the advantages that time-constraints can confer; one IUG noted, perceptively, that *‘having a narrow time factor has increased the amount of pressure, but it was a motivation to continue and see the hard work results’*. Two UoG students felt that IUG availability for communication should be mandatory, which suggests that, as organisers, we needed to make the constraints under which the IUG students were participating clearer from the outset, along with the fact that they were joining on a wholly voluntary basis. IUG comments were really interesting; though no clear picture really emerges, there were some really interesting ideas for possible future development. One student asked for closer matching between majors, while another asked for precisely the opposite, i.e. an opportunity for inter-disciplinary work. Like the UoG students, two would have appreciated a longer project, and two (quite understandably) hoped for funding to allow the foreign travel that would allow genuine face-to-face encounters. The interesting idea of expansion to embrace other universities was also mooted, presumably (though not necessarily) within Palestine. The idea of extending the teleconferencing aspect of the project to permit IUG participants to interact with UoG experts in their respective fields is an intriguing (and achievable) one, as was extending the pre-course input to include *‘some lectures on how to present and manage a team work’*.

And lastly, in response to the question whether they would recommend the participation to their friends, of 23 UoG responses, 18 said ‘yes’, two said ‘no’, and three were unsure. The motivations behind the overwhelmingly and gratifyingly positive response were on the whole fairly generic, though language enhancement (without reference to any specific skill), the chance to make friends, study-skill enhancement, increased inter-cultural awareness, and sheer fun were mentioned by three or more students. Of 10 IUG responses, all said ‘yes’, two had already recommended it to their friends (before the project had technically ended), and one asked to be allowed to repeat the experience, if the project is repeated.

We have looked in some detail now at the specific findings, and in Section 8 will now step back to see the bigger picture, taking the ‘very useful’ findings as an indicator.

EAST 2: Discussion of overall findings

Though using the ‘very useful’ findings as an indicator of general satisfaction may seem over-simplistic, it forefronts two facets of EAST2 with some clarity: the project was evaluated highly by a commanding majority of UoG respondents, and the evaluation of the project by the SET cohort at UoG was consistently more positive than that given by the Biomed.

Table 18 ‘Very Useful’ answers, SET vs Biomed (University of Glasgow students)

	SET	Biomed
General academic development	60%	41%
Communication skills	45%	33%
Team-work	56%	41%
Problem-solving	54%	29%
Digital literacies	45%	25%
Cross-cultural awareness	65%	38%
Real-life issues	55%	n/a
Specialist knowledge	40%	29%
Usefulness to <u>subject-specific essay</u> / report	48%	33%
Usefulness to final presentation	46%	42%

Moving on to view the IUG respondents’ ‘very useful’ ratings, two interesting aspects emerge: firstly, EAST2 was once again evaluated very positively (even more so than by the

UoG participants); secondly, the evaluation of the SET cohort data was again, in almost all categories, higher than that given by the Biomed.

Table 19 'Very Useful' answers, SET vs Biomed (IUG students)

	SET	Biomed
General academic development	80%	60%
Communication skills	70%	40%
Team-work	60%	60%
Problem-solving	60%	40%
Digital literacies	60%	50%
Cross-cultural awareness	60%	40%
Real-life issues	60%	n/a
Specialist knowledge	40%	50%
Usefulness to subject-specific essay / report	n/a	70%
Usefulness to final presentation	n/a	70%

Two fundamental questions emerge:

1. Why did the SET cohort rate their project more highly than did the Biomed, at both institutions?

We feel that the answer to this may lie in a combination of two factors. One fundamental point to note is that employment opportunities for Gazan students post-university are considerably lower for SET than for Biomed graduates, and it may be the case that SET students at IUG invested more in the programme's possible outcomes (or, more likely, simply had more time available to dedicate to supporting their partners in Glasgow). The more 'horizontal' relationship trialled by the Biomed in EAST2 asks equally of both sides, and it may be that the Biomed at IUG lacked the time to exploit to the full the opportunities provided by the project and that, as a result, the UoG Biomed too felt slightly less positive about overall outcomes than did the UoG SET students. But the higher satisfaction levels for SET than for Biomed may also have been less driven by time available in Gaza than by the nature of the research tasks. The SET students were looking at science- and engineering-related issues that were in the majority of cases linked specifically to the situation in Gaza, while the Biomed were looking at medicine-related issues that were in the main generic, of relevance to broader humanity. This might appear at first sight to be

an advantage. But our suspicion is that the Gaza-specific nature of the tasks facing the SET students actually set up a vital, and very motivating, information-gap; the students in Glasgow needed answers which (perhaps of fundamental importance) they couldn't get from a simple internet search, so Gaza-Glasgow interactions were taking place for a genuine reason.

2. Why were the IUG students in almost all cases even more positive than the UoG students, across both cohorts?

Here, the very specific challenges that face Palestinians must be acknowledged. Higher education and English language represent what a partner from Gaza termed a 'rope of hope' for building better future for student-participants and, beyond this, improving the life qualities of families. In the context of high rates of unemployment among graduates and the tough competition for a very limited number of jobs and postgraduate scholarship opportunities (see World Bank, 2014), students bring a strong motivation to work hard, improve their language skills and prove their professional competence. As natural resources have been confiscated, and industry, tourism, exports and imports have been subject to strict limitations for decades, the principal natural resource currently available to Palestinians is their human capital, expressed in particular through education and English (see PCBS, 2016). Strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and a positive attitude towards education in general and the English language in particular result, and (we feel) in all probability explain the affective factors behind their very positive ongoing commitment to the course, and similarly enthusiastic responses to the end-of-course survey.

The above two questions give the good bases for generalising the discussion regarding telecollaboration so that it is more of use to other educators willing to experiment with such projects. We take the 2007 paper by O'Dowd which reports on the benefits of telecollaboration and use our projects as a case study to comment on the researcher's findings.

O'Dowd (2007) refers to the uniqueness of cultural exchanges, whereby the participants get access to 'national memory', a set of subjective and personalised perceptions of the culture represented which is completely different from the cultural facts as presented in textbooks.

This seems true for the SET cohort, with the Glasgow-based students being able to see the Gazan context not just by reading about it but through their partners' eyes. They could actually experience aspects of it by being unable to contact their mentors due to power shortages or problems with connectivity. An added advantage in this situation was that youth from a politically and economically underprivileged culture gained an outlet to voice their concerns and represent the reality in the way they experience it to a sympathetic and interested audience.

Telecollaborative projects often facilitate the development of constructive dialogue as opposed to 'a mere unreflective exchange of information between partners' (O'Dowd, 2007). In order to ensure this, collaborative assignments must be structured in such a way that students are intrinsically motivated to rely on each other for contributions, react to them and act on them, rather than just perform individual tasks that later can be assembled into the final output; in other words, the telecollaboration design needs to attend to the process as well as the product. In case of the EAST project, this was confirmed because the task design required ongoing negotiation within wider groups (IUG vs UoG) and local subgroups within them (UoG and IUG). This was particularly true for the SET cohort, whose task was structured in such a way that the information had to be not only exchanged but also actively listened to and acted upon, and the students used a range of language functions in order to elicit action from their partners by means of direct and indirect questions, requests, etc. While dialoguing, the students were interested in disentangling nuanced meanings of the information provided by their partners, as they were aware of the fact that the correct understanding would support them or hinder in their further work. It could be said that the exchanges were purely transactional and instrumental by nature (and task design) as the students, particularly those at UoG, were under considerable assessment-related pressure and working within tight time-frames. The task set-up for the medical group was less successful as it created a loophole in the sense that it was possible to complete the project with minimal inter- and intra-group interaction, as illustrated by some of the final presentations.

Another finding O'Dowd reports on in his 2007 paper is related to purposeful use of technology during telecollaborative projects. Technologies offer different affordances when it comes to carrying out particular types of pedagogic activities; for instance, asynchronous communication tools, such as email, facilitate delayed communication which is likely to support written output that is more in-depth, reflective and carefully thought out (like a reader

who is given more time to process information and respond to it). Synchronous technologies, on the other hand, such as skype text, voice or video chat, lend themselves well to quick and dynamic communications whose depth is perhaps compromised, but the rapidity of responses and feedback is likely to make up for the loss of deeper analysis. Chatting in real time may be less time-consuming and it resembles face-to-face conversations, which can be very motivating for all the parties involved. In the case of the EAST project, it was clear that at least some of the students tried to vary the use of technology and the decisions taken often depended on the outcome they wanted to achieve. Using synchronous tools was not compulsory but we recommended it and the previous year's participant highlighted in his talk how useful Skype had turned out in the completion of his project work in 2015. As the survey results show, some of the students engaged in real-time exchanges despite the logistical challenge of setting them up. The question arises why it is that some students opted for such a mode of communication; for example, are there certain prerequisites at play here such as personality traits, learning preferences, the level of commitment to the project itself, and (in the case of UoG students) the whole pre-session course and the following PG study? It is probably the combination of all these factors but this may be something to explore prior to setting up any telecollaborative project to ensure such driven participants are distributed evenly across the groups to help all the students to progress at the same pace and achieve higher-quality outcomes.

When planning and implementing telecollaborative projects, it cannot be assumed that the students and teachers have the necessary skills to participate in such pedagogic activities successfully. Some of the more reflective individuals may be able to pick these up while on the task, as illustrated by some of the questionnaire open comments discussed earlier, but again this cannot be assumed safely for the whole cohort. The EAST project showed that the time spent preparing the SET students at IUG for their role of mentors by offering them an online course in constructive feedback was well spent. The experience of face-to-face project work some of the UoG students gained in the earlier phases of the pre-session course may have been helpful in organising the groupwork. However, it seems more structured support has to be built in to help the students manage the online aspects of working together within such tight time frames and under assessment pressure. The debriefing sessions, organised ad-hoc for the medical cohort by the project co-ordinators at UoG, were helpful but more systemic and better integrated solutions are needed to avoid the students' and teachers' confusion on both sides. Speaking of the latter, it is necessary that the teachers are on board

and take ownership of the project and even model various aspects of the telecollaboration in the classroom (O'Dowd, 2007). In the case of the EAST project, the teachers' involvement was brought to a minimum in order not to increase their already high workload, but it seems a lot of information and guidelines may not have made their way to the students, as the teachers relied on the organisers to convey the messages to the students directly, either via the social media or the virtual learning environment, and so they did not reinforce them in class. Finally, it is interesting to note that so many EAST participants indicated meeting new people and making friends as the main gain of the project. Appel and Mullen (2000: 298) in their paper on pedagogical considerations for telecollaborative projects notice that in the case of forming friendships, reciprocity deteriorates and the language benefits decrease. While this may be true for narrowly-defined telecollaborations, i.e. as email exchanges between native speakers of two different languages, forming a friendship in a broadly conceptualised telecollaboration using English as Lingua Franca like the EAST project may have a very positive effect on the commitment and engagement, as students are likely to communicate more with people they care about.

Telecollaboration set-up guidelines

In order to help other educators to design a telecollaborative project (following the extended definition whereby English, being lingua franca, is the means to an end) that fits their contexts and their students' needs, we have devised a set of guidelines which outline the steps, challenges and concerns to take into account when planning, implementing and evaluating a telecollaborative project. In devising it, we have drawn on our own experience as well as the learning design toolkit as suggested by the Hands-On ICT Project (www.handsonict.eu) and recommendations made by O'Dowd in his 2013 paper focusing on overcoming barriers to the integration of telecollaboration into higher education curriculum. The learning design approach sees educators as designers who use techniques typical of user-centred design, such as empathy, iteration, rapid prototyping and reflection, often exploited by architects, software engineers and product designers to solve the challenges set by their clients. A designer-educator identifies a similar challenge or puzzle in their settings, refines their understanding by investigating the stakeholders, their profiles, needs and wants as well as wider social, material and other contextual factors. Having acquired this knowledge as well as researched similar challenges in other settings, the educator designs the preliminary solution, prototypes and rapidly refines it in order to arrive at a better version. The evaluation

is built into the process very early on in order to maximise learning from failures and mistakes.

When investigating how the telecollaboration may fit into the curriculum, it is worth starting with a rough plan which identifies the material and social characteristics of the environment in which the organiser (often the teacher) and their learners operate. Another thing to do is to pair up with a partner abroad. Research into telecollaboration shows that robust and steady working relationships between organisers result in more successful and sustainable telecollaborative projects (O'Dowd, 2007; O'Dowd, 2013) and our experience confirms that. Once an initial expression of interest has been warranted, a round of negotiations and discussions, interwoven with careful investigation into each local context can start. The first thing to consider and discuss is what both partners want to achieve through the project and how it, if successful, is going to affect them, their learners and also colleagues, and possibly their departments and even whole institutions. It may be useful to identify each partner's strengths and see how these can contribute to the project in complementary ways. When imaging the project, the following recommendations from O'Dowd (2007) may be very useful as they focus on creating authentic contextualised telecollaborations: an educational context with a language focus; participants' needs are identified and met; participants are given guidance and preferably training in providing peer feedback; interaction is structured around authentic tasks; the flow of communication is maintained by establishing realistic milestones and deadlines; the stakeholders are sufficiently efficient in using the tools; and lastly partners are as compatible in terms of interests and personality as possible.

To ensure the compatibility, a technique for learning design approach may prove useful, namely a 'persona' concept, which stands for the archetypical student-participant (and teacher, particularly if it is a team of teachers who are going to be involved). When thinking of the prototypical participant, it is better to identify their behaviours instead of focusing on demographics, as the former will be more helpful in identifying their goals and so later designing appropriate tasks. The things to consider include: education and experience, role and responsibilities, technical skills, subject domain skills and knowledge, motivation and desires, goals and expectations, obstacles to success and unique assets and how these can affect, positively or negatively, the behaviour, actions and performance. Something to pay particular attention to would be the existing skills in relation to being engaged in a telecollaborative project, including digital literacies and transferrable skills. This should later

be matched against the minimum of skills needed to participate successfully and any gaps and mismatches should be addressed by providing training and support prior to and while the project is under way.

The next step is to investigate the context by focusing on factors and concerns related to key contextual aspects: material, social and intentional, and how these impact the design planning, implementation and evaluation so that the needs of the stakeholders are met as closely as possible. This examination can help to reframe and refine the educational challenge by considering and assessing what may go wrong. The material characteristics refer to the physical space and the tools and objects the stakeholders have access to. These will certainly include access to hardware, software and networks available to participants at university and at home. As mentioned earlier, particular types of tools, for example ones facilitating synchronous and asynchronous communication, come in with various affordances and it is a worthwhile exercise to weigh up their advantages and disadvantages to make an informed decision so that they contribute to the pedagogical gains rather than losses. O'Dowd (2007) recommends that technologies should be selected depending on the function and which aspect of the project they can best support, an approach to technology integration he refers to as 'realistic'. A related issue is the set of skills the participants have or need to have in order to participate in the project effectively, including constructive dialoguing and peer feedback provision, as well as to troubleshoot when things fail to go according to a plan, which takes us back to the persona concept discussed earlier. This need to go back to an earlier planning stage demonstrates well the iterative nature of the design process.

The social aspects include organisational structure, groupings of and relations between various stakeholders, conventions and norms. Depending on the nature of the collaboration across the borders resulting in different types of relationships between the students, for example vertical mentorships or horizontal co-researching partnerships, one may need to think of devising support mechanisms for mentors and mentees or co-researchers as well as in case of dysfunctional groups. And lastly it is important to look into beliefs, desires, motivations, expectations, and mental and emotional barriers of individual actors, which constitute the intentional factors. The students' perceptions may be shaped by various past experiences, not always positive ones, and it may be useful to discuss those with them in order to manage their resistance as well as expectations so that they know exactly what the project involves in terms of commitment, input and output and what challenges they are likely to encounter. Such induction sessions should be offered more than once and preferably

topped up with follow-up meetings or at least instant communication opportunities for any student or teacher to voice their confusion or concerns. It may actually be worth, if possible, involving the students and other staff members in the design process so that they co-own the project, take responsibility for it and have a clear understanding of the rationales for making pedagogical and logistical choices. Something to consider is the telecollaboration contributing directly or at least indirectly to the students gaining credit at the end of the course (O'Dowd, 2013). This is not so much to exert pressure by means of assessing the activity outcomes but more to give recognition to the efforts made by the students and teachers alike. The activity also gains more importance this way and it may be easier to negotiate additional resources for the staff involved.

While considering the wider social context of the project, namely the whole institution as opposed to the very localised context of the course itself, O'Dowd (2013) recommends looking into how the tele-collaborative activity can be linked with issues and activities at a higher level, for instance internationalisation activities, physical mobility programmes and the institution's external profile. This is crucial as, according to the researcher, telecollaboration still does not belong to the mainstream of pedagogical activities and so there may be numerous obstacles to implementing it, for example not accounting for increased workload for the participating staff, need for technical support or additional training for teachers and students alike. As a result, a lot of work initially may have to be done by the individual teachers themselves, and in their own time. It is crucial to plan small but dream big and perhaps have a longer-term plan of a growing cycle of telecollaboration activities, as we for instance did with by extending EAST 1 to devise EAST 2. This is because, as O'Dowd (2013) asserts, careful, purposeful and sustainable instances of technology integration often stand a good chance of being noticed and accepted as part of normalised teaching practice. Such a recognition may be helpful in overcoming certain institutional barriers and result in a change of attitudes on the part of the management, leading to recognising the value of telecollaborative projects.

The next thing to do is to define the learning objectives of the telecollaborative project which should identify the behaviour, the conditions and the standard required of the project participants to demonstrate that they have acquired the skills and knowledge that are subject of the project. It is helpful to include peer feedback provision here as without the explicit mention of this it is easy for it to slip through the net during the design of the activities. And

if peer feedback does not explicitly feature in the timeline of the project, the students are not likely to engage in it, as the research by Ware and O'Dowd (2008) showed and as some of our observations confirm.

To gain a global picture of the project, a scenario approach is recommended. Having received feedback from colleagues and stakeholders on the ideas generated so far, it should be possible to outline the main characteristics of the project using the scenario format:

- Actors – Who is involved?
- Goals – What is the rationale?
- Settings – Where and when is it happening?
- Objects – What tools are involved?
- Actions – What do actors do?
- Events – What happens to actors?
- Results – What is achieved?
- Your design – What role does the telecollaboration project play?

When designing the telecollaborative activities, it is worth thinking of creating genuine opportunities for learners to engage with each other's ideas. This is more easily achieved if the tasks involve higher-order thinking skills such as analysing, synthesising, creating, or evaluating as these may yield bigger volumes and better quality constructive dialogue between the partners. If the activity focuses on simple information exchange that do not invite the students to act upon it the dialogues may end by being rather unreflective (O'Dowd, 2007).

Overall, telecollaborative projects, as described in this report and other studies on the topic, tend to be messy and unpredictable due to their open-ended nature and the number of participants involved as well as variables often beyond the control of the organiser. They are also time-consuming, multifaceted and complex when it comes to organisation and integration, a common issue for any educator involved in such projects (O'Dowd, 2013).

While careful planning is key and this would include contingency plans, not everything can be predicted and so organisational and logistical issues are bound to arise while the project is under way, as are communication breakdowns and disagreements between stakeholders. For this reason, participating learners *and* teachers have to be warned and prepared as well as possible, but certain qualities like embracing ambiguity and uncertainty may be success-

driving factors. If the partnership is to develop over the years, it is crucial to build the growth potential into the project and actively seek ways of linking it to wider institutional practices related to internationalisation and technological integration.

Conclusion

This positive evaluation of EAST 2 from students in both Gaza and Glasgow - particularly gratifying in terms of general academic development and cross-cultural awareness, but also clear as regard problem-solving and teamwork - suggest that the collaboration between the two institutions should be maintained and further developed. The next collaboration will focus on the SET cohort, which (we have seen) returned higher satisfaction levels than the Biomed students. We feel that the provision of feedback to IUG students (on language and on content), as provided to Biomed students, should be extended to the SET participants in any future iteration of EAST – this was commented on very positively by the Biomed students at IUG during EAST 2. This will necessitate finding teaching assistants within the UoG School of Engineering, and the funding needed to pay them. EAST 3 is likely thus to be more focused, in that it will concentrate on just one subject-set, and will provide feedback to the IUG participants which should have a further knock-on effect on the commitment of the SET students from IUG (already high) to the project, and consequently on the ‘subject-specific feedback’ responses, assessed relatively poorly during EAST 2. There will be a need to pay for TAs, but the scaling-back (without Biomed students) will reduce overall costs, from the £9,000 required to run EAST 2 (and paid for via the British Council English Language Teaching Award) to an anticipated £4,500 / £5,000 for EAST3.

Suggestions leading on from specific feedback may be useful, particularly in terms of information to be provided to the UoG students on day 1. Some suggested that a teleconference could be initially arranged by the organisers right at the start of the course, to help the students from both institutions break the ice. Explicitly stating the increasing dominance of NNS-NNS exchanges across the English-speaking world would also help the students see the value of persevering to overcome comprehension challenges. IUG students knew about the nature of the collaboration well in advance, and it might also be useful (as both participants and teaching assistants suggested) to give UoG students some time for mental preparation. Uncertainty regarding who, exactly, will arrive in Glasgow before the

very day the course commences has to date prevented this, but it is something we plan to explore for EAST 3.

More ambitious plans may also be possible, post-2017. One very interesting development, leading directly from this ELTRA-supported project, has been a successful bid for Erasmus+ funding of 231,000 Euros, which will bring 24 IUG students to the University of Glasgow in summer 2017. The desirability of face-to-face encounters was suggested in student feedback, and this is clearly a very welcome development indeed. We cannot predict how many of these will be SET students, but we are already working on how best to exploit their physical presence, and excited by the possibilities this offers.

One obvious way forward would be to embrace other interested overseas institutions: any new partner must be available to work in July / August, the time-zone must be close to the UK's, broadband speeds must be similar to those available in Gaza. Above all, faculty and staff need to buy into a project that is more about the educational 'process' than about any tangible 'product', with the many day-to-day uncertainties this brings, and benefits that are thus often intangible. Should such an expansion be possible, we again hope to make use of the administrative strengths of IUG, the expertise of their staff, and the experience they have gained, in developing any future links with a third party; the possibility of developing IUG as a pre-sessional support 'hub' is one that we would be excited to explore. We also hope that other institutions will find the template included in this paper of use, and may be curious to exploit / report on similar collaborations between organisers of summer pre-sessional courses in the UK and institutions overseas.

References

- Aouragh, M. (2011). Confined Offline, Traversing Online Palestinian Mobility through the Prism of the Internet. *Mobilities*, 6(3), 375-397.
- Appel, C. and Mullen, T. (2000) Pedagogical considerations for a web-based tandem language learning environment. *Computers & Education*, 34 (2000), 291-308.
- Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Buckingham: Open University Press, McGraw Hill.
- Bikowski, D. (2011) Review of 'Online Intercultural Exchange: An Introduction for Foreign Language Teachers'. *Language Learning and Technology*, 15(1), 24-28.

- Crawford, E. and Kirby, M. (2008) Fostering Students' Global Awareness: technology applications in social studies teaching and learning. *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 2(1), 56-73.
- Daly, S.R., Mosyjowski, E.A., Seifert, C.M. Teaching creativity in Engineering courses. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 2014, 103/3, 417-449.
- Dudley-Evans, T. and St John, M.J. (1991) *Developments in ESP. A multidisciplinary approach*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Gibbs, G. and Simpson, C. (2004). Conditions under which assessment supports learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1, 3–31.
- Greener, S. (2009) e-Modelling – Helping Learners to Develop Sound e-Learning Behaviours. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 7(3), 265 – 272.
- Guariento, W.A., Rolinska, A. and Al-Masri, N. (2016). Investigating EAST (English for Academic Study Telecollaboration). *Proceedings of the 123rd American Society for Engineering Education Conference*, New Orleans, USA.
- Kachru, B. (2006). *The handbook of World Englishes*, Wiley-Blackwell, London
- Kramsch, C. (1998) *Language and Culture*. Oxford, OUP
- Ladyshevsky, R. K. (2006). Peer Coaching: A constructivist methodology for enhancing critical thinking in postgraduate business education, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25/1, 67–84.
- Lucena, J., Downey, G., Jesiek, B., Elber, S. (2008) Competencies beyond countries: The re-organization of Engineering Education in the United States, Europe and Latin America. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 97/4, 433-447.
- Mayordomo, R.M. & Onrubia, J. (2015) Work coordination and collaborative knowledge construction in a small group collaborative virtual task. *Internet and Higher Education*, 25/1, 96 -104.
- Nicol, D. (2011). Developing the students' ability to construct feedback. Enhancement Themes Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Available at: <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/developing-students-ability-to-construct-feedback.pdf?sfvrsn=30> Accessed 30/08/2016
- O'Dowd, R. (2007) Evaluating the outcomes of online intercultural exchange. *ELT Journal*, 61(2), 144-152.
- O'Dowd, R. (2013) Tele collaborative networks in university higher education: Overcoming barriers to integration. *Internet and Higher Education*, 18(2013), 47-53.
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) (2016) Press Release on the Eve of International Literacy Day, 8th September. Available at: <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1483&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>
- Sadler, D.R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18, 119–144.
- Saraceni, M. 2015, *World Englishes, a Critical Analysis*. London, Bloomsbury
- Schaeffer, D., Panchal, J.H., Thames, J.L., Haroon, S., Mistree, F. (2012) Educating engineers for the near tomorrow. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 28/2, 381-396.

- Topping, K. J. (2009). Peer Assessment, *Theory Into Practice*, 48:1, 20-27.
- UCAS (2016). Available at: <https://wwwucas.com/ucas/postgraduate/postgraduate-study/international-students> Accessed 02/06/2016.
- UNDP (2014) Available at:
<http://www.ps.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-research-PHDR2015Education.pdf>
- Ware, P.D. and O'Dowd, R. (2008) Peer feedback on language form in telecollaboration. *Language Learning and Technology*, 12(1), 43-63.
- White, C. (2007) Focus on the language learner in an era of globalization: Tensions, positions and practices in technology-mediated language teaching. *Language Teaching*, 40/4, 321–326.
- World Bank (2014). Available at:
http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/Factsheet_Gaza_ENG.pdf Accessed 02/04/2016.
- World Bank (19 Sept 2016) Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. Available at:
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-monitoring-report-to-the-ad-hoc-liaison-committee-september-2016>

Paper 7:

Constructive Feedback Course

based on the course given as part of the [EAST](#) (English for Academic Study Telecollaboration) Project run by [English for Academic Study](#) at the University of Glasgow and the Islamic University of Gaza



Image by Lucas Di Patricio (2013) [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) <https://flic.kr/p/havZwE>



QR code for this resource

Course overview

This short online course aims to help the students develop an understanding of what constructive feedback is and offers them an opportunity to practise giving such feedback in the context of texts related to science, engineering and technology.

The course is conceived as a preparation course for the [EAST Project](#) during which engineering students from Gaza were asked to act as critical friends offering content-oriented feedback to pre-sessional students at the University of Glasgow. We believe the course can be offered on its own, either in isolation or as part of a wider mentoring scheme for students who want to develop skills in ‘leadership by example’. The course can easily be adapted for any discipline - this would require changing the samples in tasks 5 and 6.

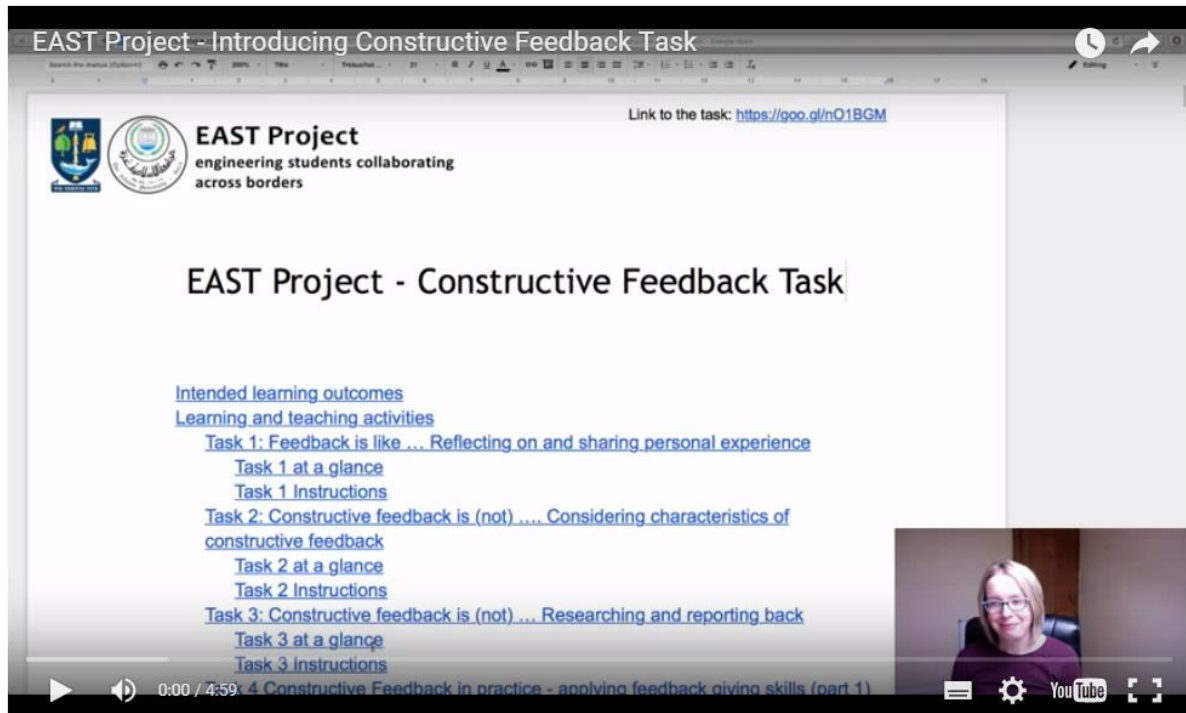
The course is intended to be delivered over two weeks and it is run online and asynchronously. In terms of design, it follows the framework of [exploration](#) - [integration](#) - [application](#) (Garrison and Arbaugh, 2007), with each stage being progressively more complex, challenging and open-ended. The students work in groups and the teacher monitors interactions and motivates them to stay on task and track in regard with deadlines via a closed Facebook group. The final task requires submitting an assessed assignment which the tutor gives feedback on. After that there is an extra week for [reflection and evaluation](#). Timings for

each activity are approximate and may need to be adjusted depending on the general progress of the course. See the [course overview](#) for details.

The main technology used is Google Docs and it is recommended that the students have gmail accounts. Although students without gmail accounts are still able to access and edit the materials, tracking their contributions will not be possible. When setting up the documents, attention has to be paid to shareability settings so that there is no barrier to access. Padlet is used for sharing personal experiences and reflections at the beginning and end of the course respectively. A closed Facebook group is used as a news and discussions forum and for collective feedback. A public blog may be used for documenting the process.

All the documents are created by the teacher; he or she creates [an empty template for each group](#) and pastes the subsequent tasks into them on the task start date. This increases the teacher's workload but helps them monitor their students' progress and has a motivational effect on the students. An alternative approach would be to ask the students to copy the template, and the task instructions could be provided in other ways, for example via Facebook, in order to decrease the workload.

The course can be enriched by synchronous sessions during which the teacher can provide collective feedback and the students have an opportunity to ask questions and express their concerns. Adding a video element, for example to introduce the whole course, individual tasks or to give feedback, may constitute an added value too.



A video introducing the constructive feedback course: <https://youtu.be/tkKHtNqU68w>

Table of contents

[Intended learning outcomes](#)

[Learning and teaching activities - Overview](#)

[Learning and teaching activities - Step by step](#)

[Task 1: Feedback is like ... Reflecting on and sharing personal experience](#)

[Task 1 Instructions](#)

[Teacher's notes](#)

[Choose your group - Signing-up sheet](#)

[Task 2: Constructive feedback is \(not\) ... Considering characteristics of constructive feedback](#)

[Task 2 Instructions](#)

[Teacher's notes](#)

[Task 3: Constructive feedback is \(not\) ... Researching and reporting back](#)

[Task 3 Instructions](#)

[Teacher's notes](#)

[Task 4 Constructive Feedback in practice - Giving generic feedback](#)

[Task 4 Instructions](#)

[Task 5 Constructive Feedback in practice - Giving subject-specific feedback](#)

[Task 5 Instructions](#)

[Task 6 Constructive Feedback in practice - Applying feedback giving skills
\(Assignment submission\)](#)

[Task 6 Instructions](#)

[Sample 1 From an assignment entitled: Provision of water supplies](#)

[Sample 2 From an assignment entitled Electricity generation](#)

[Sample 3 From an assignment entitled: Food production](#)

[Course evaluation](#)

[Review of learning outcomes](#)

[Evaluation survey](#)

[Reflection on learning](#)

[References](#)

[Appendix](#)

[Feedback on Sample 1 from an assignment entitled: Provision of water supplies](#)

[Example 1.1](#)

[Example 1.2](#)

[Example 1.3](#)

[Feedback on sample 2 from an assignment entitled Electricity generation](#)

[Example 2.1](#)

[Example 2.2](#)

[Example 2.3](#)

[Feedback on Sample 3 from an assignment entitled: Food production](#)

[Example 3.1](#)

[Example 3.2](#)□

Intended learning outcomes

On completing this short course,

you will have reflected on your experience of giving and receiving feedback;
you will have read about constructive feedback to collaboratively identify the key features and principles of providing constructive feedback to others;
you will have developed a better understanding of how constructive feedback differs from non-constructive, descriptive or destructive feedback;
you will have evaluated samples of feedback in order to deepen the understanding of constructive and non-constructive feedback;
you will have practised giving constructive feedback on a sample of writing.

Learning and teaching activities - Overview

EXPLORATION				
1	Sharing personal experience	Students share their experiences of receiving/giving constructive feedback and how the experience influenced their learning.	Padlet - Online wall (see an example)	All students
	Start X By X+1 (1 day)		Individual work	No feedback on needed on individual contributions - instead write up a summary (see an example).
	Groupings	Students form groups by using a signup sheet. Ideally there will be 3-4 students in each group.		Monitor closely so that everybody joins a group - send reminders if needed or simply assign strugglers yourself.
2	Considering effective and ineffective feedback	Based on their own and peers' experience Sts brainstorm characteristics of effective and ineffective feedback (what makes it constructive, what makes it counter-productive).	Group Task Sheet (Google Doc) - fill in a table.	Students divided into groups of 3-4
	Start X+1 By X+3 (2 days)		Group work - each group working with their own Google Doc.	No feedback needed, just monitoring and dealing with direct questions. Alternatively, collective feedback in form of a mind map (see Teacher's notes).
3	Researching what makes constructive feedback	Reading and taking notes on articles and then reporting to the rest of the group by adding more ideas to the table from the previous stage. They have	Google Doc Add to the table from task 2 Identify the most important principles of	Groups of 3-4 students

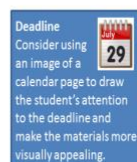
		to agree on 4 most important principles of constructive feedback provision (together with rationales)	feedback provision	
	Start X+2 By X+5 (3 days)		Part 1 - Individual/pair work (each reads a different article, article 3 can be done by a pair). Part 2 - Group work (they build a fuller picture of constructive feedback)	Careful monitoring to address any questions that may arise. Minimal feedback - model answers (provided) can be shared via Facebook. Sts can also give feedback on each other's contributions.
INTEGRATION				
4	Giving generic feedback	Students evaluate examples of constructive criticism provision, trying to identify the effective and ineffective elements of feedback.	Google Doc - students share their ideas as in-line comments	Groups of 3-4 students
	Start X+5 By X+6 (1 day)		Collaborative work	Some feedback if/when needed or appropriate. Model answers (provided) can be shared via Facebook.
5	Giving subject-specific feedback	Students evaluate a sample of student's writing in order to construct their feedback on it. Then they can compare it with two samples of feedback to identify and discuss its effective and ineffective elements.	Google Doc - students share their ideas as in-line comments	Groups of 3-4 students
	Start X+6 By X+9 (3 days)		Collaborative work	Some feedback if need be. The first step can be made optional if you're pressed for time.
APPLICATION				

6	Applying feedback-giving skills - Assignment submission	Students collaborate on providing feedback on a piece of text and submit for tutor feedback. The get assigned one of the samples provided.	Google Doc	Groups of 3-4 students
	Start X+9 By X+12 (4 days)		Collaborative work	Written tutor feedback by X+19 (1 week)
REFLECTION AND EVALUATION				
7	Reflection and evaluation	Students review their progress, reflect on their learning and evaluate the course.	Google Doc, Padlet, Google Forms	
	Start X+12 By X+19 (7 days)		Individual work	Review and evaluation should be completed by the time they get tutor feedback. Reflections can be finished after receiving feedback from tutors.

Learning and teaching activities - Step by step

Task 1: *Feedback is like ...* Reflecting on and sharing personal experience

Task 1 Instructions



1A

Imagine you need to finish the sentence from the title: *Feedback is like* What picture would you use to represent what feedback means to you?

Ensure you use pictures under CC-licence. To help you with CC-licence search, consider using [Creative Commons search engine](#).

1B

Next consider the following: As part of your studies and/or professional experience you must have received feedback from your tutors, classmates or colleagues.

Maybe you also gave feedback to your colleagues or teachers. This could be feedback on performance or a piece of work.

What was the experience like? Simply describe it without evaluating it yet.

Please share your pictures and thoughts on the online wall (Padlet) [\[insert link\]](#) by [\[insert date\]](#).

Keep checking the wall to see what your colleagues have posted - are their experiences similar to or different from yours?

Teacher's notes

It's important that the posts on the Padlet wall (see Fig 1) are kept brief and refer to personal experience. The students are likely to make generalisations and start discussing features of feedback, which is what the next task is about. It may be worth posting a model to show them what exactly is required of them and/or monitoring them closely and posting a reminder if the students' posts become lengthy. Another thing to watch out for is the licence to use the images.



Fig 1 An example of a Padlet wall
Choose your group - Signing-up sheet

At the same time, please write down your name on the sign-up sheet [\[link to the sign-up sheet\]](#), which will allow us to divide you into groups.

There will be [\[insert a number\]](#) groups, each with [\[insert a number\]](#) members.

Join our Project Facebook group



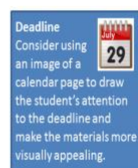
Don't forget to join our Facebook group too, if you haven't already done so. It can be found here: [\[link to Facebook group\]](#)

Post your intro to the Project Padlet

Post a short introduction to the [\[link to the Padlet display\]](#) - this will be embedded in the public Project website so please bear this in mind when selecting a photo of yourself and writing up your introduction.

Task 2: Constructive feedback is (not) Considering characteristics of constructive feedback

Task 2 Instructions



Based on the ideas shared on the online wall [\[insert link\]](#) in the previous exercise, fill in the table below.

Think of different aspects of constructive and non-constructive feedback, eg:

content,
length,
language,
tone of the language, etc.

Don't worry too much if your ideas are not fully formed yet. It's about brainstorming and sharing - there will be time to investigate details in the next task.

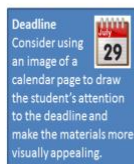
This is a group task so everybody should contribute to the table. You can comment on your ideas using the 'comments' function integrated into Google Docs. You should complete this task by [insert date].

What makes feedback constructive?	What makes feedback non-constructive
<i>e.g. when it is written in clear and precise language.</i>	<i>e.g. when it's very vague and general.</i>

Teacher's notes

An alternative format could be to present the ideas in a mind-map. A mind-map could also be a way of collecting ideas from all the groups in order to give collective feedback to the whole cohort.

Task 3: Constructive feedback is (not) ... Researching and reporting back



Task 3 Instructions

This task consists of two parts. Part A entails individual/pair work while part B requires you to collaborate with each other. You should complete the whole task by [insert date].

PART A

Time to dig around and find out more about constructive feedback. Each of you will do some research. Below is a table with links to resources re: constructive feedback. Please choose one by adding your name in the relevant row.

Article title and link	Student name (please write down your name next to the article title to 'book' it)
Article 1: Tips for giving constructive criticism on academic writing https://academicalism.wordpress.com/2013/12/03/tips-for-giving-constructive-criticism-on-academic-writing/	<i>Student's name</i>
<i>Use this section to make notes on the most relevant ideas from Article 1 - please don't just copy and paste the text but try to paraphrase and summarise its ideas using your own words.</i>	
Article 2: Zen and the Art of Constructive Criticism http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2012/zen-and-the-art-of-constructive-criticism/	<i>Student's name</i>
<i>Use this section to make notes on the most relevant ideas from Article 2 - please don't just copy and paste the text but try to paraphrase and summarise its ideas using your own words.</i>	
Article 3: Teaching the Art and Craft of Giving and Receiving Feedback http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/facpubs/2560/ To access the article you have to download it from the author's page (free). The article is quite long - we suggest you only read the following sections: 'Literature Review' and 'Models of Performance Feedback'	<i>Student's name</i>

Use this section to make notes on the most relevant ideas from Article 3 - please don't just copy and paste the text but try to paraphrase and summarise its ideas using your own words.

PART B

Revisit the table from [task 2](#) and, based on your notes, add information to the table so that you've got a full picture of what constructive feedback is or is not.

Next, as a group, agree on 4 most important principles when giving constructive feedback. Write the list in the box below with explanations why a particular principle is important (you should use full sentences).

Write your 4 principles of constructive feedback in this box. This is a collaborative task.

Your principles will be used to form [rubrics](#) which will be shared on the project blog.

Teacher's notes

Possible answers:

Use the Feedback Sandwich method

You start off by focusing on the strengths—what you like about the item in question.

Then, you provide the criticism—things you didn't like; the areas of improvement.

Lastly, you round off the feedback with (a) a reiteration of the positive comments you gave at the beginning and (b) the positive results that can be expected if the criticism is acted upon.

Focus on the situation, not the person

Firstly, detach the situation from the person. This distinction is crucial. Take the person out of the equation and focus on the behavior / action / situation / issue at hand.

Comment on the issue, not the person. For example, “The clothes are dirty” and not “You are dirty”. “The report is late” and not “You are late”. “The food is oily” and not “You are a bad cook”.

Don’t make personal attacks. Comments like “I’m so sick and tired of...” or “You’re so stupid / negative / lazy / unorganized / ” come across as accusatory. Stay away from attacks. Don’t use active voice; use passive voice. Example of active voice vs. passive voice: “You gave a bad presentation.” vs. “The presentation you gave was bad.” Notice that the passive voice shifts the attention away from the person and brings it to the subject matter.

Share how it affects you. Rather than go on and on about how bad the thing is, share how it affects you. This shifts the focus away from the person and onto yourself, which lets the person take a step back to evaluate the situation. It also gives him/her insight to where you are coming from.

Be specific with your feedback

Focus more on objective points than subjective opinions. Just saying “I don’t like it” is not helpful. On the other hand, stating the specific things you do not like, is helpful.

Break your feedback down into key points. Don’t give your feedback as one big lump. Break it down into various key points, then give your feedback point by point.

Give specific examples of each point. What are the exact situations or examples where the person exhibits the behaviors you highlighted in #2? Point them out. There is no need to highlight every single example – just pointing out 1-2 key examples per point will be sufficient. The intention here is to (a) bring the person’s awareness to things which he/she may be oblivious about (b) illustrate what you mean.

Comment on things which can be actioned upon

Knowing what’s actionable and unactionable requires you to be empathetic. Understand the person’s situation and his/her objectives, then provide your critique based on that.

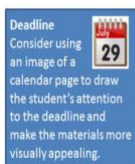
Give recommendations on how to improve

When giving recommendations, it helps (a) to be specific about the recommendations and (b) to briefly explain the rationale behind the recommendation.

Don’t make assumptions

Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-give-constructive-criticism-6-helpful-tips-nishlan-pillay> [Accessed 29/06/2017]

Task 4 Constructive Feedback in practice - Giving generic feedback



Task 4 Instructions

This task asks you to evaluate samples of feedback. You need to complete both exercises by [insert date].

Look at the following examples of feedback given in informal everyday situations. The second option is always more effective. Why is that? Write up your explanations in the box provided beneath each example. Complete this task by [insert date].

It's up to you how you go about doing this task, whether you work individually or as a group.

Example 1 Giving feedback on a person's dressing style

You're too old-fashioned. You are always wearing granny clothes that make you look old and boring.

From my recollection, the clothes I've seen you wear before tend to be dull in colours and out of date with current trends. While there is nothing wrong with that, it makes the wearer come across as older in age and uninterested in their personal image.

Write your explanations here. Do you agree with each other as to why the second piece of feedback is more effective? You can use the comment function to ask each other questions.

Example 2 Giving feedback on a person's character trait

You're always so negative. It's so tiring to be around you.

There have been times when I was hurt by the comments you gave as they were somewhat demeaning. For example, the last time I bought a new bag, you said it was an ugly bag. That took me by surprise and I was quite sad that day.

Write your explanations here. Do you agree with each other as to why the second piece of feedback is more effective? You can use the comment function to ask each other questions.

Example 3 Giving feedback on a report

Good effort on the report but I didn't like it. I think there is room for it to be better.

Good effort but there are some things which can be improved - namely, (a) the formatting and (b) the final recommendations. The formatting is not standardised - there are some parts that use Arial font and other parts that use Times New Roman font. In a formal report, it is best to have a standardised font. For the final recommendations, the ideas are good by they

are too brief, especially ideas #1 and #3. The management would need more data to make their assessment.

Write your explanations here. Do you agree with each other as to why the second piece of feedback is more effective? You can use the comment function to ask each other questions.

Example 4 Giving feedback on a presentation

The presentation is too long. Make it shorter.

Instead of 2-3 examples per point, which detracts from the main message, limit 1 example to each point. This way the presentation will be more succinct and have greater impact. By doing this, the presentation length will be easily reduced from 30 minutes to 20 minutes.

Write your explanations here. Do you agree with each other as to why the second piece of feedback is more effective? You can use the comment function to ask each other questions.

Teacher's notes

Commentary on example 1

While probably said with good intentions, (A) is not exactly constructive criticism. It makes a personal attack and makes it seem like he/she is the problem. As for (B), the situation is detached from the person. Critique is given on the situation itself.

Piece of advice: Focus on the situation, not the person. When critiquing, focus on the situation on hand, not the person.

Commentary on example 2

Like Example #1, (A) makes a personal attack at the person. It also does not tell the person what he/she can do, which makes it unconstructive. While it's tricky to give constructive criticism when it comes to someone's personality, (2) is successfully accomplished by separating the person's actions (that makes him/her negative) from the person him/herself. This then makes it easy to critique the behavior without offending the person in question.

Commentary on example 3

(A) is hardly constructive. What do you mean by "didn't like it"? "Like" and "dislike" are subjective words. Unless objective criteria is used, it's hard for the person to decipher what is

the problem. (B) constitutes great feedback that is specific. It tells the receiver the 2 key problem areas, why they are problem areas, and specific examples where they appear.

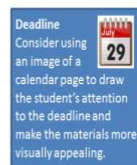
Commentary on example 4

(A) is not very helpful. Reducing the presentation time can be done via many ways – cutting out the points (which then compromises on the message), removing examples, talking faster, and so on. What exactly do you mean? Part of a constructive criticism includes being specific. (B), on the other hand, is an example of great recommendation that is specific. Rationale is also provided which explains your point of view to the person.

Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-give-constructive-criticism-6-helpful-tips-nishlan-pillay> [Accessed 29/06/2017]

Task 5 Constructive Feedback in practice - Giving subject-specific feedback

Task 5 Instructions



This task asks you to produce some feedback and then compare it with two samples in order to evaluate them.

Look at the following example of writing from an engineering student. It's an excerpt from a larger piece on challenges related to the re-instatement of a rail link between England and Scotland. Read it carefully and think what is good about it and what could be improved. What feedback would you give this student? How would you phrase it? Draft it in the box below and then compare with the feedback samples. Complete this exercise by [insert date].

This is an individual task so each of you should draft the feedback in the box provided. Once it's ready we'll do some peer review as well as compare it to samples of feedback.

In 1969, the railway from Edinburgh to Carlisle was closed, leaving substantial towns such as Hawick and Melrose in the Borders region between Scotland and England over 50 miles from the nearest rail link. In September 2015 half of this route, leading to Galashiels, will finally be re-opened, once again linking the Borders region northwards to Edinburgh, but the southern section into England remains closed.

There are two main engineering obstacles, firstly the reconstruction of the missing viaduct at Hawick (originally demolished because teenagers were throwing stones from it down into the

town), and secondly the crossing of the M6 motorway near Carlisle, which has cut across the original trackbed.

Reconstruction will allow increased tourism in the borders region, attracting those who normally travel without stopping from England through to Glasgow / Edinburgh. It will also allow people living in the Borders to access employment opportunities in the city of Carlisle. Previous rail re-openings in Scotland, e.g. Stirling to Alloa in 2012, have subsequently outperformed passenger forecasts by a factor of 3.

[Name]

Write your feedback here - it's up to you how you organise it. You can either write it together or each of you can write the feedback on their own and then compare with the other's versions.

[Name]

Write your feedback here - it's up to you how you organise it. You can either write it together or each of you can write the feedback on their own and then compare with the other's versions.

[Name]

Write your feedback here - it's up to you how you organise it. You can either write it together or each of you can write the feedback on their own and then compare with the other's versions.

Rubric to evaluate effectiveness of feedback

The following are the criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the feedback

Clarity of explanation - *I understood what was good and/or what needed to be improved*
Specificity - *it referred to specific parts of my writing and gave specific recommendations*
Tone (polite, positive) - *the feedback was given in such way that I felt positive about it*
Feed forward - *it provided suggestions how the writing could be improved*
Developmental - *it made me think about improvements instead of telling me what to do*

Evaluate the piece of feedback using the criteria above and the following scale:

- 1 - feedback fully meets the criterion and is exemplary in this respect
- 2 - feedback between 1 and 3
- 3 - feedback partially meets the criterion and is satisfactory in this respect
- 4 - feedback between 3 and 5
- 5 - feedback does not meet the criterion and is unsatisfactory in this respect

	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity					
Specificity					
Tone					
Feed forward					
Developmental					
Other					
Overall comment					

Once you have written your feedback you can compare it with the two models below. Which of the following feedback samples is more effective and constructive and why? Discuss it with your groupmates, using the comments function. Which sample is your feedback similar to?

Sample feedback (1)

Your analysis of the situation shows little understanding of the local situation in the Borders region – it's quite obvious you are not from the UK. You don't include any sources, you fail to provide any costings. Above all, your work so far is very weak in engineering terms, and is really one-sided. I believe this needs a lot of development in order to become of use to anybody interested in helping this very neglected region of the UK, and I hope you will try to do a better job.

Sample feedback (2)

You explain the background well, outlining the potential tourism and employment opportunities to the Borders region. Your mention of a similar project in Stirling is relevant, but this is a much shorter (and cheaper) rail line, and in a much more heavily-populated part of the UK. You could also make the economic benefits clearer by including actual figures (i.e. likely costs / projected vs actual passenger numbers for the Stirling scheme). You fail to mention another potential advantage, i.e. the reduction in traffic congestion on roads in the region, if the rail link is extended to Carlisle.

These are suggestions, but I also have two (more fundamental) comments to make:

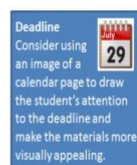
1 – you need to look at alternatives to rail – what about improving the road links, for car travel from the Borders region to England? What about developing the bus links? This would make your writing more balanced.

2 – it would be interesting to know more about the engineering challenges involved in re-building the viaduct in Hawick (and I'm not sure if the part about the teenagers throwing stones is of real importance!) and in crossing the motorway. Can you perhaps find sources that look at similar engineering challenges elsewhere, and evaluate the responses?

But overall, I was impressed with the way you have started to work on this project, on a region of the UK about which (before you started this course) you knew nothing. I hope that you will find some of my suggestions useful, and please feel free to ask for any clarification.

Task 6 Constructive Feedback in practice - Applying feedback giving skills (Assignment submission)

Task 6 Instructions



Look at the following piece of writing taken from the first draft of an essay written by a student on a specific engineering-related problem in Palestine. It's a section discussing potential solutions to the problem.

Please bear in mind this is the first draft so the students are still researching the topic. For this reason the analysis may not be complete and your input is crucial to help the student writer to develop it further.

This is a collaborative task. Discuss the effectiveness of the paragraph as a group and write up some constructive feedback together.

This is a final task too - you will submit it to the tutors and receive feedback on it.

You need to complete this task by [insert date].

Sample 1 From an assignment entitled: *Provision of water supplies*

Gaza is naturally a very dry area, and water has always been a scarce resource. This scarcity has been exacerbated by destruction of power supplies, on which distribution and filtration depend, and of water pipelines. There has also been serious damage to the sewage system, with increased contamination of drinking-water supplies as a result.

Many of the longer-term responses will depend on effective funding from European Union sources, but in the short-term charitable bodies such as Water Aid need to ensure that bottled water is available for drinking purposes. Work to re-construct damaged infrastructure needs to be carried out, to isolate potable and waste-water systems. Ways to increase the provision of water supplies in the future must also be developed – the universities in Palestine may be able to offer a lead here, by collaborating with one another and with international partners to develop low-technology desalination and water-reuse technologies.

Sample 2 From an assignment entitled *Electricity generation*

In July 2014 the only power plant in Gaza was badly damaged by shelling, leaving the fire extinguishing systems unusable and resulting in the destruction of the fuel tanks; without fuel, electricity cannot be generated.

Various responses are possible. In the short term, rationing of electricity must continue, ensuring that the limited supplies which are available are evenly distributed. All those who are most in need, such as in hospitals and in schools, need to be prioritized, but the businesses which provide work for the young and on which reconstruction depends must also be supplied with power. At the same time, European Union reconstruction funds need to be accessed, to help in the speedy rebuilding of the damaged fuel tanks and the provision of smaller generators to overcome the interim energy shortfall. Finally, to ensure longer-term energy autonomy for Gaza, exploration of offshore gas reserves should be encouraged.

Sample 3 From an assignment entitled: *Food production*

The high population density within the Gaza strip, coupled with an arid climate and Israeli restrictions on access to the Mediterranean for fishing have all limited the population's ability to feed itself.

One response is to enable farmers to maximise currently available water supplies, by repairing distribution systems destroyed in 2014 in order to reduce the high levels of water-loss, and to encourage the use, where possible, of closed pipes as substitutes for open canals (which lose more to evaporation).

The high density of urban living necessitates an urban response, too, and the development of aquaponics is being explored. This involves a combination of aquaculture (the farming of fish) with hydroponics (the cultivation of plants without soil), gaining two products (fish and vegetables) from just one input, with very economical use of water. Tanks and piping can be constructed locally, though the systems needs a pump to ensure year-round circulation of oxygenated water.

Finally, a valid (non technological) response may be the setting-up of microcredit groups, as has occurred for example in Bangladesh, providing funding in particular for small enterprises for the marketing and processing of agricultural products.

Write your feedback here (remember it should be collaborative work).

Comments from Tutors

Teacher's notes

Things to look at:

Clarity of explanation (it is easy for the reader to understand what was good and/or what needed to be improved)

Tone (polite, positive) (the feedback was given in such way that the recipient feels positive about it)

Specificity (it referred to specific parts of writing and gave specific recommendations)
Feed forward (it provided suggestions how the writing could be improved)
Developmental (it made the recipient think about improvements instead of telling them what to do)

See the **Appendix** with samples of students' feedback and the tutors' feedback on them.

Course evaluation

Review of learning outcomes

Have a look at the intended learning outcomes, copied below for your convenience. Consider each statement in relation to your learning on the course and put a tick in an appropriate box

I have reflected on your experience of giving and receiving feedback.

Yes	No
-----	----

I have read about constructive feedback to collaboratively identify the key features and principles of providing constructive feedback to others.

Yes	No
-----	----

I have developed a better understanding of how constructive feedback differs from non-constructive, descriptive or destructive feedback.

Yes, definitely.	Yes, a little	No.
------------------	---------------	-----

I have evaluated samples of feedback in order to deepen the understanding of constructive and non-constructive feedback.

Yes	No
-----	----

I have practised giving constructive feedback on a sample of writing.

Yes	No
-----	----

Evaluation survey

Please fill in the following evaluation form [\[link to form\]](#).

Your feedback is welcome - we are interested whether the course has any impact on your academic development and we are interested in ways of improving the course.

Reflection on learning

Following up on the review in the previous section, think about the key things you have learnt during the last two weeks. Jot down some ideas and then based on them write up a short reflection and share it to the online wall [insert link] by [insert date].

References

- Dorney, E. (2012) Zen and the Art of Constructive Criticism. In the Library with the Lead Pipe, [online journal] 2 May 2012. Available at: <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2012/zen-and-the-art-of-constructive-criticism/> [Accessed 18 Feb 2016].
- Garrison, D.R. and Arbaugh, J.B. (2007) Researching the community of inquiry framework: Review, issues, and future directions. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10/3, 157-172.
- Harms, P.L. and Roebuck, D.B. (2010) Teaching the art and craft of giving and receiving feedback. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 73(4), 413-431. Available at: <http://bcq.sagepub.com/content/73/4/413.full.pdf> [Accessed 18 Feb 2016].
- McCutcheon, M.A. (2013) Tips for giving constructive criticism on academic writing. *Academicalism*, [blog] 3 Dec 2013. Available at: <https://academicalism.wordpress.com/2013/12/03/tips-for-giving-constructive-criticism-on-academic-writing/> [Accessed 18 Feb 2016].
- Pillay, N. (2015) How to give Constructive Criticism: 6 Helpful Tips, [blog] 9 Apr 2015. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-give-constructive-criticism-6-helpful-tips-nishlan-pillay> [Accessed 18 Feb 2016].

Appendix

Samples from the students have not been edited in any way apart from formatting so that each uses the same font size.

Feedback on Sample 1 from an assignment entitled: *Provision of water supplies*

Example 1.1

Feedback from Group 1

In my opinion, which may be either true or false.

First of all, the student has not complete his writing .

So I encourage him to organise the essay to be in good sight and format like writing introduction, paragraphs and conclusion . Moreover , It is very essential to review his essay very well such as grammar , use Powerful Vocabulary and etcetera.

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 1

I think you need to comment on the student's understanding of the content - you live in Gaza, so you are in a good position to tell the student whether his/her ideas will work within the Gazan context. Some specific content-related points follow:

Perhaps this student should include some statistics about the damage, or the increase in water-borne illnesses since the infrastructure was destroyed?

Why does the student think that the EU is a likely provider of funding - has this been the case in the past? Why is Water Aid more likely to provide short-term help with water supplies - again, has this occurred in the past?

Specific details on the technical challenges would be very helpful - perhaps the student could find instances from other countries where, for example, similar problems have been overcome. This would certainly be relevant to Gaza.

Finally, when the student mentions the strengths of Palestinian universities, it would be helpful to give some details about these strengths, i.e. the courses they run / the specialisations of some of the teaching staff.

Example 1.2

Feedback from Group 2

After reading the text, there is a some data need editing.

Provision of water supplies

The Gaza Strip, is the southern part of Palestine, lays on the Mediterranean region, which arid and semi-arid regions.

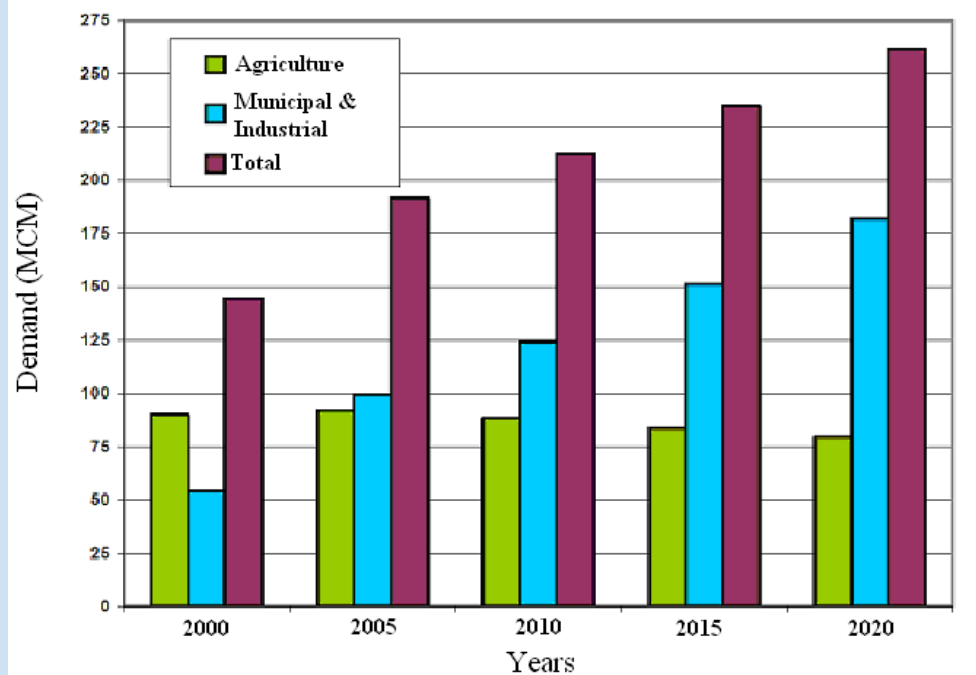
Shortage of water is perhaps the most crucial environmental problem. This shortage may be associated with deterioration of water quality.

Climate change and rapid population growth increase water demand, also the dominance of the Israeli occupation over the Palestinian water and land resources exacerbates demands on limited freshwater supplies.

Currently, water demand exceeds the available water supply. The gap between water supply and water demands is steadily growing and is calling for the adoption of integrated water resources management approach and the mobilization of any additional conventional and non-conventional water resources.

The overall water demand in the Gaza Strip is expected to increase to 265 MCM by 2020 due to the increasing population as shown in the figure.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to conserve and protect freshwater resources and to use the water of lower quality for irrigation. The use of treated wastewater in agriculture is one of the strategies adopted for increasing water supply to face water scarcity, and is justified on agronomic and economic grounds but care must be taken to minimize adverse health and environmental impacts.



Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 2

This is a lovely piece of writing with a well-chosen visual...

but....

you have to remember your role.

Your job is to provide constructive feedback. So, instead of giving the students the rainfall figures, you could say 'this would be a stronger piece of writing if you can include some statistics, e.g. rainfall figures'.

Your job is not to write the student's work for them. If you do this, the work that they submit at the end of their course will be your work, not theirs.

Example 1.3

Feedback from Group 3

The Gaza Strip is one of the most regions of the world in terms of population density, where the Gaza Strip area of 360 square kilometers, and a population of 1.8 million people. Limited water resources and reflect significantly. Rain is the main source of water in the Gaza Strip, which are in the winter.

The water situation in Gaza is very bad as the 97 percent of the Gaza Strip water unfit for human consumption. And due to the small size and high population density, and the presence of a single water source, a groundwater reservoir which does not exceed the production capacity of 55 million cubic meters per year. And the need for the sector is estimated at 180 million cubic meters a year for domestic and agricultural use and the annual deficit almost 100 million cubic meters, due to the lack of water in the aquifer, this leads to the occurrence of the phenomenon of seawater intrusion of water anywhere in the aquifer, which leads to increased salinity of the water. The wells near the coast

become witnessing a significant rise in the proportion of chloride rate; bringing in some areas to 1500 mg per liter, while the average should not exceed 250 mg per liter. In addition to the waste water is treated and used improper use of pesticides and nitrates as well as the high rate that must be modified according to international standards of 50 to 70 mg per liter where he arrived in the Gaza Strip to five times the normal rate.

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 3

My comments on this feedback are similar to the previous one.

This is a lovely piece of writing, with lots of details that were not mentioned by the student, but you need to remember your role - you can help the Glasgow students by pointing out any mistakes in content that you think they have made, or by pointing out further areas that they need to explore.

But try not to write their answers for them.

Feedback on sample 2 from an assignment entitled *Electricity generation*

Example 2.1

Feedback from Group 4

Your essay is very brief and talked about the problem only in the period of 2014 although we are suffering for a long time. So I have some comments to enrich your essay:
It's important to explain the situation in Gaza from the first Israeli war on Gaza in 2008, 2012, and 2014.

Also you can illustrate the effects of electricity problems on the citizen of Gaza Strip and how two million suffered without electricity for 16 h/day or even for many days as in war of 2008.

You can mention for temporarily solutions which we were forced to deal with it such as the donation of Qatar which covers only for few weeks, also buying cheaper fuel from Egypt, bringing it via a network of underground tunnels .

Your responses are good since you mentioned all side of live in Gaza and your proposal about offshore gas is very important since our borders are in closure almost the time. Finally I hope my comments be useful to improve your essay.



Power Plant before the war



Power Plant in the war

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 4

I like this feedback. It gives concrete areas that the Glasgow students could try to explore, especially the section on temporary ways to help the situation in Gaza. Maybe you could phrase the feedback as questions, e.g: 'Why don't you look into the use of tunnels from Egypt for fuel-access?', or 'Look into the help that Qatar provided' (you need to encourage the Glasgow students to go away and do further work!).

You don't mention whether the student's medium and long-term ideas are workable in the Gazan situation. For instance, is it easy to 'prioritise', as the students suggests? Is it easy to access EU funds (and if so, what about some examples of how the EU has been able to help in the past)? Finally, if there is oil off-shore, perhaps the student needs to say why it hasn't been accessed to date, and how the barriers to accessing it could be overcome.

Overall, don't be scared to tell the student where they can improve in terms of understanding of the Gazan situation - you have content-understanding that they lack.

I like the final sentence - it shows you have a good grasp of your role as provider of constructive feedback.

Example 2.2

Feedback from Group 5

- He gives a good brief introduction that could explain simply the situation in Gaza power plant. However some problems of coherence and construction of the passage can be noticed. Here are some suggestions to improve this piece of writing.
 - The first sentence of introduction might be: In July 2014 the only power plant in Gaza was badly damaged by shelling, resulting in the destruction of fire extinguishing systems and fuel tanks. Consequently, electricity cannot be generated.
 - Various solutions are possible instead of responses.

- “Firstly and temporarily, rationing of electricity must continue...etc.” instead of what is written above.
- He could strengthen the expression “European Union reconstruction funds need to be accessed” by writing “European Union reconstruction funds is a must to”
- A speedy rebuilding instead of the speedy rebuilding.
- “the businesses which provide work” need an example to illustrate the exact meaning.
- Leave tab space before the beginning of each paragraph.
- This passage do not reflect an engineering viewpoint. I mean anyone of any discipline can represent the problem and suggest these solutions.

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 5

You are giving very useful feedback on the student’s use of English. But the most relevant part of your feedback is the final sentence - we would like you to comment on the content of the student’s work, rather than the language they use to express it.

I can see that your own English is obviously very strong, but I hope you can remember your role here. It is our students’ role to write in the best English possible (but it has to be their own work, of course). It is my role (and Anna’s) to comment on our students’ English, and try to work out ways to improve it. It is your role, in the EAST Project, to think of areas of content that the Glasgow students can explore.....are there areas they haven’t considered (or haven’t considered in enough depth) / have they said anything that is wrong?!

Perhaps, if the EAST Project is a success this summer, we can think of ways to expand in future years, to allow some form of language- (as well as content-) feedback; it’s good to see that your own command of English is so strong.

So, to help this student, I would suggest that you think of ways to expand on your final sentence - specifically, what engineering issues should our Glasgow student work on?!

Example 2.3

Feedback from Group 6

Everyone needs electricity in hospitals, companies, schools and homes. So, What the methodology to be followed for the rationalization of electricity ?

On the other hand if there is support for the rebuilding of the damaged fuel tanks, which ensures that this tank not destroyed and return the problem again ?

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 6

You have highlighted an important point here with your first comment - how is it possible to 'prioritise' certain areas, when all of the areas are so important? I agree that you are right to ask the Glasgow students to go into more detail, i.e. to say which areas they would prioritise, and why. It would also be useful for the Glasgow students to look at places with difficulties similar to Gaza's (though there are few in such very challenging circumstances).

Your second comment is totally understandable - like you, I can see that an engineering-based response will be futile if (for example) the energy plant is bombed once again. But I hope you will be able to try to limit your comments as far as possible to the technological aspects of the problem. By linking IUG and UoG students to discuss the technological challenges, the underlying political issues will emerge automatically - I don't think it is necessary to state them directly. But please be assured that one of our main reasons for setting up the EAST Project is to help highlight the day-to-day suffering of people in Gaza.

Feedback on Sample 3 from an assignment entitled: *Food production*

Example 3.1

Feedback from Group 7

The essay looks very good in terms of writing and introducing the issue. However we have several comments on it as shown below:

1. The issue discussed in general terms and not specific, also it should be directive with clear and easy to understand steps, so that the responsible parties could take it seriously.
2. The author ignored citizen's role in solving the issue by raising their awareness toward such issues.
3. One more thing is that the authors forget to mention any references for the information they provided in the essay.
4. The author found a good example, but we think that Bangladesh is not sharing the same situation as Gaza Strip which means that it may be failed if applied in Gaza.

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 7

I like this feedback, especially points 2, 3 and 4, which target specific ways in which the Glasgow student can improve the 'essay'.

Perhaps you could give the student a little more help? In what way might the citizens awareness be raised (point 2)?

I like the way start with praise, and the way you praise the student's suggestion (point 4) before giving your own opinion - it's good to point out the positives, as well as the areas to work on. But perhaps I disagree with your comment about Bangladesh. Yes, Bangladesh is different from Gaza, but the student is talking about raising credit, and there may be crossovers here. As a rule, I would encourage the Glasgow students to look for other parts of the world that have faced / overcome difficulties similar to Gaza's. Nowhere will ever

be exactly the same as Gaza (or Glasgow, or China, or...), but there will always be things we can learn from others.

Example 3.2

Feedback from Group 8

It is a good starting draft, but there is a few comments and suggestion that would make your report more comprehensive.

- The report stated that Gaza-strip has a high population density, Can you include official sources that cited how high the population is in numbers comparing to the geographical area? You could also compare the Gaza area and population with a known place or famous city to help the reader knowing where it is located in the map (i.e. Gaza strip is 360 km² which is nearly half the area of london (607 mi²) with estimated 1,816,379 of population ...etc). May be including figures or actual map will be helpful and dependable.
- You could also make the "Israeli restrictions on access to the Mediterranean for fishing" more cleaner by finding how far in meters is the legitimated fishing zone due the controlling of borders by Israeli ? You can even compare the quantity fishers gain to the demand inside the strip then argue the needs which insisted us to investigate other food production methods. The statement will be more convincing and impactful.
- The report mentioned that one of the responses is to maximise water supplies the farmers used, but the solution did not address any information about the farming status in Gaza-strip. For instance, What if there is no enough agriculture area to serve the population? Or how do farmers in Gaza-Strip irrigate their crops? Do they actually use "open canals" to suggest the usage of closed pipes instead? Similarly, The solution should explain the difference between both methods and explain the degree of damage that influence the distribution systems in 2014.
- It would be interesting if you clarify the next point in a bit more detail. For example what is the development of aquaponics ? How does the combining of hydroponics

and aquaculture in Gaza-Strip will be economically efficient ? (Can you include cost) what is required to construct Tanks and piping locally?

- The report mention that Bangladesh has experienced the funding of microcredit groups which leads to fruitful results.

Can you indicate why do you think they are (Gaza-strip and Bangladesh) similar?

In addition, Why do you think the microcredit will be successful in Gaza-strip too?

Do they (Gaza-strip and Bangladesh) share the same obstacles, area, population, and/or occupation so the solution project will be relevant ? The point will be cogent if you include more justifications.

Final:

Generally speaking, you successfully introduce this crucial problem as if you were from Gaza-Strip region. I hope that you will find my comments useful, and please feel free to ask for any clarification or discuss any further suggestions.

Comments from UoG Tutors on feedback from Group 8

This is very effective feedback. It points out positives, at the same time as pointing out negatives. I like the way the writer asks the Glasgow student questions - the Glasgow student still has to do lots of work, but now s/he knows what direction to go in. The bullet points are very clear, and where you think that the Glasgow student has made a mistake (e.g. you say ‘What evidence is there for open-canals in Gaza?’) you point this out. You point out the value of details, e.g. statistics regarding the fishing zone permitted by Israel / the infrastructure damage in 2014. You also point out the need for the student to look more closely at the overall agricultural demands of Gaza’s large population. Finally, you ask the student to justify why Bangladesh might be a useful example for Gaza in terms of raising credit. I also think the closing summary is both useful and encouraging. This student will go away with a clear indication of what s/he needs to do in order to improve the essay, and with a strong sense of motivation.

Paper 8:

Constructive content-based feedback in EAP contexts: lessons from a cross-border engineering-related pre-sessional course

Abstract

This paper investigates a small-scale project concerned with establishing and sustaining an e-partnership between international students in the UK, and engineering students in Palestine. It focuses on the value of peer teaching and learning as an attempt to ensure a greater balance between knowledge and language on a UK pre-sessional English-language course, by involving more able peers from a Gazan student-body. At the same time, it was hoped that such an arrangement would enable the Gazan students to develop a range of transferable skills, of use in accessing employment at a distance.

The article initially outlines the wider context to the Project, discussing the issues related to instituting peer learning/teaching schemes in an HE setting. At its centre though is the presentation and evaluation of a constructive feedback course, whose design and delivery aimed at facilitating the development of skills needed to perform as a peer mentor. It demonstrates students' attitudes towards feedback and the strategies they use when asked to provide their peers with content feedback in an e-partnership. In this way it provides food for thought to educators interested in developing similar cross-border schemes.

Though the potential issues that emerge in terms of First-world /Global South imbalance are very considerable, the paper suggests that telecollaboration projects of this nature may help overseas students start interrogating discipline-specific literacies, thus preventing the decontextualization of the learner, including those unable to pay to study at a prestigious HE institution.

Keywords

constructive feedback; EAP; ESAP; pre-sessional; telecollaboration; peer feedback; content feedback; Palestine; Gaza

Introduction

In universities within the English-speaking world, the significance of international students is clear - over 430,000 attend annually in the UK, for example (UCAS, 2016), almost 20% of

the overall student body (HESA, 2016). The high fees non-EU students contribute (around 45% of the international student body in 2015/16) mean that this importance continues to grow. Entrance via a secure English language test such as IELTS is common, but increasingly many of these students opt for pre-sessional subject-specific English language programmes (English for Specific Academic Purposes – ESAP – as opposed to English for Academic Purposes only – EAP), seeing value in a mode that combines language, study skills and subject-content as preparation for their forthcoming studies. While such a combination seems appealing, it presents its own challenges. As subject lecturers often take leave during summer, the subject-related element of the ESAP course is often restricted to the use of disciplinary texts. Since EAP teachers may not be necessarily fully acquainted with discipline-related literacies, the development of language and study skills is often treated as a neutral, a-social, a-cultural and a-political skillset (Boughey and McKenna, 2016).

In Palestine, as a representative of the Global South, the challenges facing the tertiary-education sector are further complicated by the fact that 25% of the Palestinian population lives below the poverty line, with numbers in Gaza twice as high as those in the West Bank (World Bank, 2014). Specific to employment, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2015) classified 20.8% of Palestinians as unemployed, rising to over 46.2% in the Gaza Strip. The situation is particularly dire among university students, with 60% facing problems in finding work after graduation (World Bank, 2015). To tap into the knowledge, skills and strong motivation that this group possess, e-learning and e-work are key, to help expand the job market beyond the physical borders of Palestine.

The mutual needs of the universities and student-bodies in each country could, we felt, in part be answered by instituting a technology-mediated partnership between the pre-sessional students in the UK and subject students in Gaza, centred around peer learning and teaching. Through peer interactions, the subject element of the pre-sessional course would be contextualized more effectively by demonstrating to the students that language is about appropriacy-driven social meaning-negotiation rather than a mastery of grammatical forms, and this could provide a springboard for interrogation of the related disciplinary literacies.

However, in order to establish such a peer-review scheme, the future peer-mentors required training in providing feedback concerned with knowledge rather than linguistic proficiency, and this is the focus of this paper. It presents the Constructive Feedback Course (CFC) on which the UK-Gaza partnership was built, analysing the design and delivery principles, and, more importantly, the students' output, in order to evaluate their strategies when grappling with the peer-reviewer role.

Project overview

Every summer the University of Glasgow (UoG) runs an intensive ESAP course for incoming international Master's students wanting to study in Science, Engineering and Technology-related (SET) disciplines. The course is high-stakes, as its successful completion guarantees entrance to postgraduate studies. As part of their assessment, in previous years students nominated a problem within their prospective field, researched solutions, and delivered them in written and oral form. Even though the course providers strive to demonstrate to the students which discipline-related literacies are valued in the academy, due to time pressures, student-staff ratio constraints and market-driven agenda, the teaching approaches may still favour a skillful language use, particularly when it comes to feedback. Some of the pre-sessional students may have acquired some subject-knowledge through an undergraduate degree and are encouraged to co-construct new understandings through class interactions. The teachers who tend to be laymen may not be able to respond to these meaningfully. This information-gap is often rationalized as an opportunity for knowledge-exchange between students and tutors which requires levelling of the relationship between them. This, however, creates issues among the stakeholders, with teachers afraid of losing face, and students choosing not to contest their teacher's authority.

Literature clearly offers strong theoretical support for a much closer marriage between language and context. Language is not a neutral tool used to transmit knowledge, but rather a powerful meaning-making resource (Christie, 1993), in line with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. Reading and writing are socially embedded practices which require the participants to attend to appropriacy of language choices, closely related to the system of values of a particular discourse community. The importance of this 'context of situation' (Halliday, 2009:62) means that effective ESAP pedagogy should be semantically- (rather than syntactically-) driven. Christie (1993:76) adds that any separation of grammar- from meaning-related feedback is potentially misleading, even 'damaging' as it may result in perpetuating the exclusion of international students, sometimes unjustly portrayed as suffering from 'a language problem' (Boughey and Mckenna, 2016).

To address these issues, in July 2015, an online peer-review collaboration was piloted with the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), the English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) Project¹ (henceforth the Project). 20 Palestinian SET graduates

¹ Project website: <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/>

(already working toward a degree, e.g. in electrical, civil or mechanical engineering) and 35 UK-based international students (from different cultural backgrounds, planning to undertake a SET-related postgraduate course at UoG), divided into small groups, worked together on authentic and highly-contextualised discipline-specific problems. The Palestinian students had devised the scenarios, and then acted as critical friends during the collaboration, providing content-oriented feedback via social media. With this guidance, the UK-based students researched, analysed and evaluated possible responses. At the end of the Project, they delivered videoconferenced presentations to the audience in Gaza. Successful performance in this presentation, and an accompanying 1,500-word essay, allowed them to access their master's courses in September 2015 (see Guariento *et al.*, 2016). Such course redesign enhanced the classroom experience by bringing in 'live' and dynamic specialist knowledge as opposed to textbook-restricted content, and so created a natural space for the 'context of situation'. A mentoring scheme was needed, though, to ensure the Gazan graduates supported their UK-based peers constructively.

The importance of peer review

In social and collaborative learning, peer feedback can play a central role. Apart from being more immediate, plentiful and individualized (Topping, 2009), these feedback loops can allow students to communicate in a more discipline-appropriate manner, become familiar with quality expectations, develop metacognitive skills, and self-identify strengths and weaknesses (Sadler, 1989); all this requires considerable identity work, easier to negotiate in positions of equality than a power-laden student-teacher relationship. Ladyshevsky (2006) adds that peer feedback improves critical thinking. When feeding back, students need to articulate their understanding, which may require more in-depth reading. While working on interdisciplinary projects, an increase in critical thinking may be substantial, as the collaboration will, by definition, involve divergent opinions. This creates ample space for interrogating and challenging various viewpoints, identified by Boughey and McKenna (2016) as legitimated ways of reading in the academy. Olsen (1990), referring specifically to group feedback (as used on the Project), suggests that it provides more effective final drafts than those utilising just teacher-originated feedback.

Students' preference for traditional teacher-led feedback, which may be particularly marked among students used to teacher-centred methodologies, must nevertheless be acknowledged. There are also other potential social-process downsides to feedback between

groups of students (Topping, 2009:24): failure to participate, ‘free rider effects’, and diffusion of responsibility. These significant affective and social issues mean that teacher monitoring must accompany any peer-feedback initiative (especially early on), with teacher-workload implications. An effective peer-review scheme also necessitates significant resources upfront to provide an organisational framework that will host the feedback interactions, and training to ensure that the comments offered are constructive, as without this, feedback “might be too hard, critical, or misunderstand the assessment criteria” (Loureiro *et al.*, 2012:141). In the case of ESAP learners, the need for constructivism has to be articulated in terms of content-knowledge rather than language-form to better reflect the social aspects of academic literacies. Therefore, peer-reviewer training is crucial in trans-border and technology-mediated contexts to ascertain consistency of feedback quality and focus, and the following sections analyse and evaluate the input and output of the CFC as an example of such training, assessing to what extent this learning experience attends to the ‘context of situation’ on an ESAP course.

The Constructive Feedback Course

The overall aim of the CFC² was to simulate the situation in which the Gazan students would find themselves during the actual peer-mentoring phase of the Project. It was important to mimic the conditions in every aspect, i.e. working via technology, together, to tight deadlines, and with infinitely-open tasks with no prescribed answers.

The intended learning outcomes were formulated to the Gazan students as follows:

By the end of the CFC, you will have:

- reflected on your experience of feedback;
- collaboratively researched constructive feedback to identify its key features and how it differs from non-constructive, descriptive or destructive feedback;
- evaluated feedback samples to deepen your understanding of (non-) constructive feedback;
- practised giving constructive feedback on a written sample.

The course consisted of six activities completed collaboratively within groups of three over a three-week period. They were released via Google Docs one-by-one and at regular

² The CFC is an open-access resource under CC licence: <https://goo.gl/ifxdh7>

intervals, and followed the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model of exploration-integration-application (Garrison and Arbaugh, 2007). It started with activating schemata through reflecting on personal experiences of receiving and offering (non-)constructive feedback. The students were asked to post their reflections in a textual and visual form, articulating tacit understandings in an online environment that perhaps still felt unfamiliar. This was followed by collaborative research to identify the key characteristics and principles of peer-feedback provision. Having consolidated and expanded their existing knowledge, the students started integrating it via a series of short tasks, distinguishing between constructive, non-constructive, descriptive and destructive feedback.

Finally, they applied the skills by producing a written commentary on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of sample engineering-related ‘essays’, drawing loosely on the Gazan context (to be analysed in the ‘Results’ and ‘Discussion’ sections). These were written by the UoG organisers, i.e. EAP teachers with only limited knowledge either of engineering or of Gaza. For the purposes of the desired training in constructive feedback, we posited this limited knowledge as having two advantages. Firstly, the Gazan graduates would be presented with a lay analysis, similar to that which could be expected from many of the incoming UK-based pre-masters participants, and would need to tailor their feedback accordingly. Secondly, we were aware that the pieces we had produced, with only limited understanding of the daily strictures facing Palestinians, might also frustrate our Gazan student-collaborators; we felt it was better that any frustration was expressed prior to rather than during the Project (when electing to leave would be more disruptive).

Regarding the technologies used, the selection criteria included robustness, user-friendliness, cross-device accessibility and flexibility. Simultaneously, we had to acknowledge the contextual constraints, for example the regular power-cuts, the extreme August temperatures in Palestine, and the fact that the Gazan students were participating during their holidays, without remuneration. For all of these reasons, they were more likely to work from home, where the network infrastructure and electricity supply were less reliable than at IUG (which has a back-up generator). Because of this, as well as a difference in time zones and working day/weekend patterns, opportunities for synchronous communication were limited. Apart from one synchronous induction session, the CFC was mainly run through Google Docs (course content) and Facebook (communication and management). The students were already familiar with Google Docs via their studies at IUG. Additionally, Facebook and Google apps are smartphone-friendly, which further minimised access-barriers,

and enabled quicker responses, which at least partially counterbalanced the lack of synchronicity and enhanced the social aspects of the Project.

The latter advantage was particularly important as, due to limited staff time and an already high workload, the teacher-presence as part of constructing an educational experience (see the CoI framework, Garrison *et al.*, 2000) had to be approached creatively. It was hoped that the careful activity-sequencing provided sufficient scaffolding to deal with progressively more challenging tasks. The collaborative elements were also intended to develop a sense of support. The course organisers monitored from the background, stepping in only if it was deemed unavoidable, for example if the students had clearly misunderstood the task, or when the groupwork was malfunctioning. Some collective feedback was provided via the Project blog - for instance on students' contributions to the initial reflection on feedback provision - but not regularly. However, the provision of extensive and personalised feedback on the final student-group submissions was included in the course design, and the students were fully informed of this during induction.

Students' 'constructive feedback' submissions

The final CFC task asked the Gazan participants to produce their own feedback on a Gaza-relevant engineering-related issue. Each group was allocated one of the three extracts below, each discussing potential solutions to a Gaza-related problem, taken from a fictitious UK-based student's first essay draft:

- Extract 1: Provision of water supplies in Gaza (Figure 1)
- Extract 2: Electricity supply in Gaza (Figure 4)
- Extract 3: Food production in Gaza (Figure 9)

The participants were reminded that they were being asked to comment on a first draft fragment and that for this reason the analysis was likely to be incomplete and in need of targeted (and diplomatically-couched) feedback, drawing on the elements of constructive feedback learned in the CFC earlier. Each group was given three days to produce and post their feedback, and comments from organisers followed within five days.

The following section, 'Results', presents each of the extracts, followed by a sample group-response which, we felt, illustrated an interesting (and different) aspect of the constructive-feedback learning process, and then by the tutors' feedback. We were primarily

interested in the students' understanding of their role in the mentoring scheme, and what, in their view, this role entailed in terms of content, form, tone and focus. Having this information could help us predict how effectively such feedback could later complement the EAP tutor's feedback in order to better account for the 'context of situation' on a prospective ESAP course with a telecollaborative element. This would also allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of such e-partnerships, and whether they can be of any value in addressing the question of contextualizing language learning on pre-sessional courses, and levelling academic and employment opportunities in Global South contexts.

Results

Altogether, eight out of nine groups submitted their feedback responses; for reasons of space, only responses representative of main emergent issues are presented below (with original grammar and spelling), followed immediately by a corresponding response from the Project organiser.

Extract 1: Provision of water supplies in Gaza (input from [fictitious] UK-based student)

Gaza is naturally a very dry area, and water has always been a scarce resource. This scarcity has been exacerbated by destruction of power supplies, on which distribution and filtration depend, and of water pipelines. There has also been serious damage to the sewage system, with increased contamination of drinking-water supplies as a result.

Many of the longer-term responses will depend on effective funding from European Union sources, but in the short-term charitable bodies such as Water Aid need to ensure that bottled water is available for drinking purposes. Work to re-construct damaged infrastructure needs to be carried out, to isolate potable and waste-water systems. Ways to increase the provision of water supplies in the future must also be developed – the universities in Palestine may be able to offer a lead here, by collaborating with one another and with international partners to develop low-technology desalination and water-reuse technologies.

Fig. 1

An example of Gazan student-feedback on extract 1

After reading the text, there is a some data need editing.

Provision of water supplies

The Gaza Strip, is the southern part of Palestine, lays on the Mediterranean region, which arid and semi-arid regions.

Shortage of water is perhaps the most crucial environmental problem. This shortage may be associated with deterioration of water quality.

Climate change and rapid population growth increase water demand, also the dominance of the Israeli occupation over the Palestinian water and land resources exacerbates demands on limited freshwater supplies.

Currently, water demand exceeds the available water supply. The gap between water supply and water demands is steadily growing and is calling for the adoption of integrated water resources management approach and the mobilization of any additional conventional and non-conventional water resources.

The overall water demand in the Gaza Strip is expected to increase to 265 MCM by 2020 due to the increasing population as shown in the figure.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to conserve and protect freshwater resources and to use the water of lower quality for irrigation. The use of treated wastewater in agriculture is one of the strategies adopted for increasing water supply to face water scarcity, and is justified on agronomic and economic grounds but care must be taken to minimize adverse health and environmental impacts.

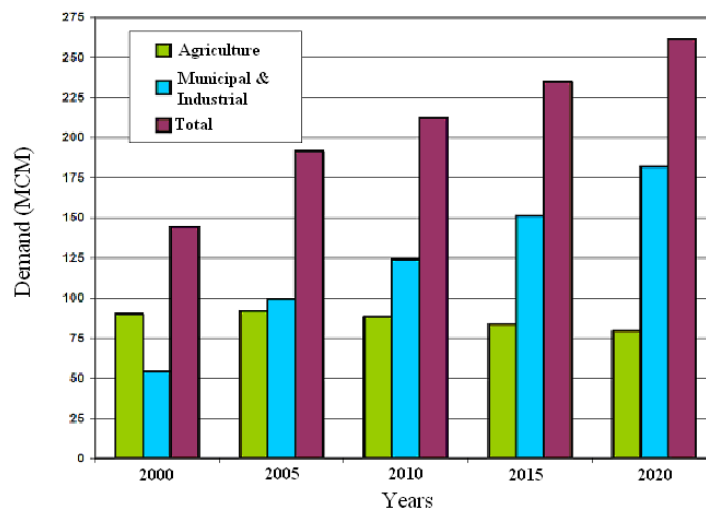


Fig. 2

Organisers' comments on student feedback on extract 1

*This is a lovely piece of writing with a well-chosen visual...
but....
you have to remember your role.
Your job is to provide constructive feedback. So, instead of giving the students the rainfall figures, you could say 'this would be a stronger piece of writing if you can include some statistics, e.g. rainfall figures'.
Your job is not to write the student's work for them. If you do this, the work that they submit at the end of their course will be your work, not theirs.*

Fig. 3

Extract 2: Electricity supply in Gaza (input from [fictitious] UK-based student)

In July 2014 the only power plant in Gaza was badly damaged by shelling, leaving the fire extinguishing systems unusable and resulting in the destruction of the fuel tanks; without fuel, electricity cannot be generated.

Various responses are possible. In the short term, rationing of electricity must continue, ensuring that the limited supplies which are available are evenly distributed. All those who are most in need, such as in hospitals and in schools, need to be prioritized, but the businesses which provide work for the young and on which reconstruction depends must also be supplied with power. At the same time, European Union reconstruction funds need to be accessed, to help in the speedy rebuilding of the damaged fuel tanks and the provision of smaller generators to overcome the interim energy shortfall. Finally, to ensure longer-term energy autonomy for Gaza, exploration of offshore gas reserves should be encouraged.

Fig. 4

An example of Gazan student-feedback on extract 2

- *He gives a good brief introduction that could explain simply the situation in Gaza power plant. However some problems of coherence and construction of the passage can be noticed. Here are some suggestions to improve this piece of writing.*
 - *The first sentence of introduction might be: In July 2014 the only power plant in Gaza was badly damaged by shelling, resulting in the destruction of fire extinguishing systems and fuel tanks. Consequently, electricity cannot be generated.*
 - *Various solutions are possible instead of responses.*
 - *"Firstly and temporarily, rationing of electricity must continue...etc." instead of what is written above.*

- *He could strengthen the expression “European Union reconstruction funds need to be accessed” by writing “European Union reconstruction funds is a must to”*
- *A speedy rebuilding instead of the speedy rebuilding.*
- *“the businesses which provide work” need an example to illustrate the exact meaning.*
- *Leave tab space before the beginning of each paragraph.*
- *This passage do not reflect an engineering viewpoint. I mean anyone of any discipline can represent the problem and suggest these solutions.*

Fig. 5

Organisers’ comments on student feedback on extract 2

You are giving very useful feedback on the student’s use of English. But the most relevant part of your feedback is the final sentence - we would like you to comment on the content of the student’s work, rather than the language they use to express it.

I can see that your own English is obviously very strong, but I hope you can remember your role here. It is our students’ role to write in the best English possible (but it has to be their own work, of course). It is our role as teachers to comment on our students’ English, and try to work out ways to improve it. It is your role, in the EAST Project, to think of areas of content that the UK-based students can explore.....are there areas they haven’t considered (or haven’t considered in enough depth) / have they said anything that is wrong?!

Perhaps, if the EAST Project is a success this summer, we can think of ways to expand in future years, to allow some form of language- (as well as content-) feedback; it’s good to see that your own command of English is so strong.

So, to help this student, I would suggest that you think of ways to expand on your final sentence - specifically, what engineering issues should our UK-based student work on?!

Fig. 6

Second example of Gazan student-feedback on extract 2

Everyone needs electricity in hospitals, companies, schools and homes. So, What the methodology to be followed for the rationalization of electricity?

On the other hand if there is support for the rebuilding of the damaged fuel tanks, which ensures that this tank not destroyed and return the problem again?

Fig. 7

Organisers' comments on the second student feedback on extract 2

You have highlighted an important point here with your first comment - how is it possible to 'prioritise' certain areas, when all of the areas are so important? I agree that you are right to ask the UK-based students to go into more detail, i.e. to say which areas they would prioritise, and why. It would also be useful for the UK-based students to look at places with difficulties similar to Gaza's (though there are few in such very challenging circumstances).

Your second comment is totally understandable - like you, I can see that an engineering-based response will be futile if (for example) the energy plant is bombed once again. But I hope you will be able to try to limit your comments as far as possible to the technological aspects of the problem. By linking Gazan and UK-based students to discuss the technological challenges, the underlying political issues will emerge automatically - I don't think it is necessary to state them directly. But please be assured that one of our main reasons for setting up the EAST Project is to help highlight the day-to-day suffering of people in Gaza.

Fig. 8

Extract 3: Food production in Gaza (input from [fictitious] UK-based student)

The high population density within the Gaza strip, coupled with an arid climate and Israeli restrictions on access to the Mediterranean for fishing have all limited the population's ability to feed itself.

One response is to enable farmers to maximise currently available water supplies, by repairing distribution systems destroyed in 2014 in order to reduce the high levels of water-loss, and to encourage the use, where possible, of closed pipes as substitutes for open canals (which lose more to evaporation).

The high density of urban living necessitates an urban response, too, and the development of aquaponics is being explored. This involves a combination of aquaculture (the farming of fish) with hydroponics (the cultivation of plants without soil), gaining two products (fish and vegetables) from just one input, with very economical use of water. Tanks and piping can be constructed locally, though the systems need a pump to ensure year-round circulation of oxygenated water.

Finally, the possibility of instituting a microcredit system, as in Bangladesh, may help farmers meet funding shortfalls.

Fig. 9

An example of Gazan student-feedback on extract 3

It is a good starting draft, but there is a few comments and suggestion that would make your report more comprehensive.

- *The report stated that Gaza-strip has a high population density, Can you include official sources that cited how high the population is in numbers comparing to the geographical area? You could also compare the Gaza area and population with a known place or famous city to help the reader knowing where it is located in the map (i.e. Gaza strip is 360 km² which is nearly half the area of london (607 mi²) with estimated 1,816,379 of population ...etc). May be including figures or actual map will be helpful and dependable.*
- *You could also make the "Israeli restrictions on access to the Mediterranean for fishing" more cleaner by finding how far in meters is the legitimated fishing zone due the controlling of borders by Israeli? You can even compare the quantity fishers gain to the demand inside the strip then argue the needs which insisted us to investigate other food production methods. The statement will be more convincing and impactful.*
- *The report mentioned that one of the responses is to maximise water supplies the farmers used, but the solution did not address any information about the farming status in Gaza-strip. For instance, What if there is no enough agriculture area to serve the population? Or how do farmers in Gaza-Strip irrigate their crops? Do they actually use "open canals" to suggest the usage of closed pipes instead? Similarly, The solution should explain the difference between both methods and explain the degree of damage that influence the distribution systems in 2014.*
- *It would be interesting if you clarify the next point in a bit more detail. For example what is the development of aquaponics? How does the combining of hydroponics and aquaculture in Gaza-Strip will be economically efficient? (Can you include cost) what is required to construct Tanks and piping locally?*
- *The report mention that Bangladesh has experienced the funding of microcredit groups which leads to fruitful results.*

Can you indicate why do you think they are (Gaza-strip and Bangladesh) similar?

In addition, Why do you think the microcredit will be successful in Gaza-strip too?

Do they (Gaza-strip and Bangladesh) share the same obstacles, area, population, and/or occupation so the solution project will be relevant? The point will be cogent if you include more justifications.

Final:

Generally speaking, you successfully introduce this crucial problem as if you were from Gaza-Strip region. I hope that you will find my comments useful, and please feel free to ask for any clarification or discuss any further suggestions.

Fig. 10

Organisers' comments on student feedback on extract 3

This is very effective feedback. It points out positives, at the same time as pointing out negatives. I like the way the writer asks the UK-based student questions - the UK-based student still has to do lots of work, but now s/he knows what direction to go in. The bullet points are very clear, and where you think that the UK-based student has made a mistake (e.g. you say 'What evidence is there for open-canals in Gaza?') you point this out. You point out the value of details, e.g. statistics regarding the fishing zone permitted by Israel / the infrastructure damage in 2014. You also point out the need for the student to look more closely at the overall agricultural demands of Gaza's large population. Finally, you ask the student to justify why Bangladesh might be a useful example for Gaza in terms of raising credit. I also think the closing summary is both useful and encouraging. This student will go away with a clear indication of what s/he needs to do in order to improve the essay, and with a strong sense of motivation.

Fig. 11

Discussion

These examples of student-feedback are illustrative of the four broad directions that the Gazan students elected to travel in, giving an insight into their perceptions of the peer-mentor role. The first three turned out to be inappropriate to the 'content mentor' role the Gazan students were about to adopt in their partnership with UK-based students, in differing ways.

The first group (Fig. 2) had elected to provide much of the content for their UK-based partner, 'telling' the students what to do, rather than guiding them toward further research, investigation and evaluation. As little room is left for the recipient to question the associated literacy practices, such feedback represents a one-way transmissive process rather than Nicol's conceptualisation of feedback as dialogue (2010), and is of limited value for the development of a student's disciplinary expertise (Sadler, 2010). Similarly, the second group's feedback response (Fig. 5) allowed little scope for the feedback-recipient to negotiate their own interpretation of the message, a condition for the peer-review process to deliver learning (Nicol *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, the feedback focused on correcting the UK-based partner's language, which would only replicate Christie's argument for the language as a mere communication instrument, rather than a resource, a theoretical and practical conundrum on many ESAP courses. Despite asking open questions which would require deeper engagement with the research problem, the third group's response (Fig. 7) showed a frustration with the wider issues facing their community which, though understandable, affected the message in a manner inappropriate to the task at hand.

Despite such a range of approaches to the feedback task we accepted their diversity and unpredictability as a risk of the Project, hoping that this in itself creates an opportunity to have a dialogue about what feedback, review and revision mean in the particular disciplinary discourse-community. We acknowledged the efforts by noting strengths of each feedback response and making recommendations for improvement, remembering that the course is developmental in nature and ensuring that we model good practices ourselves. The groups' constructive feedback, alongside with the tutors' comments, was posted on the Project website for everybody to see, providing a space for a reflective conversation about the different approaches and their varying levels of appropriacy, specificity, and even politeness. We hoped that the feedback of the final group (Fig. 10) would be recognised as a possible model for the next stage of the Project, mainly because it seems to mimic the associated disciplinary practices quite accurately, for example through asking for specific evidence to precisely support the claims.

As mentioned earlier, not all the groups completed the task, and in the case of those who did, the extent of each team member's participation was hard to quantify, so it was impossible to track individuals' engagement and progress (a weakness of the study). It would also have been useful to track progress in order to see how our feedback actually influenced the student-reviewer's feedback later during the Project and whether the later attempts were better aligned with how the subject-lecturers approach the feedback issue in the academy.

Since the Project had a developmental function, and in order to acknowledge the students' diversity of backgrounds (current undergraduate student, current master's students, master's graduate, a PhD student), apart from analysing the content of the responses, we also administered a questionnaire to gain an insight into the students' perceptions of the impact of the CFC on their understanding of constructive feedback and the ability to apply their learning.

18 out of 26 participants completed the evaluation survey. We asked them to rate their perception of understanding of constructive feedback before and after the task and how that understanding related to their confidence in giving such feedback to peers. Inspired by the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs and Tang, 2007), which describes the process of learning as progress through a series of stages, we tried to construct answer-options in such a way that the students could report on their perceived knowledge and skill at that particular time with a degree of accuracy.

Before undertaking the CFC, half of the students reported from none to very basic understanding of constructive feedback, while the other half reported a good understanding

(Fig. 12); two participants already felt able to give constructive feedback. At the same time, the two middle categories of answers were more popular than the extreme ones, confirming that the course could provide valuable learning experience.

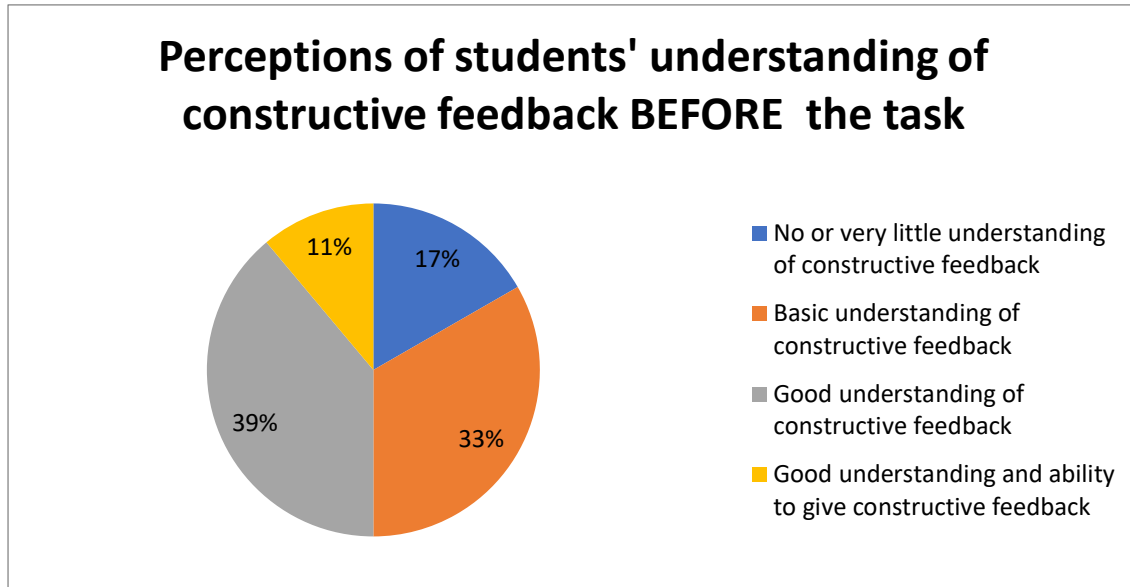


Fig. 12

The changes in the perceived understanding of the constructive feedback after completing the course (Fig.13) were noticeable, with the overwhelming majority of the student body now reporting a good understanding of the skill under discussion. It was reassuring to see this increase, suggesting that the students generally felt better-prepared to mentor UK-based students. Interestingly, the two students who initially believed they both understood and could apply constructive feedback lowered their rating, i.e. their initial perception was re-evaluated in the course of activities. Being able to link these responses with the actual contributions to the group feedback responses could help us deepen our understanding of their progress and decide if any remedial practice was still necessary. It is possible that more discussion of feedback practices within the SET disciplines needs to be built into the course tasks to increase the understanding of critical reading and writing, as suggested by Boughey and McKenna (2016).

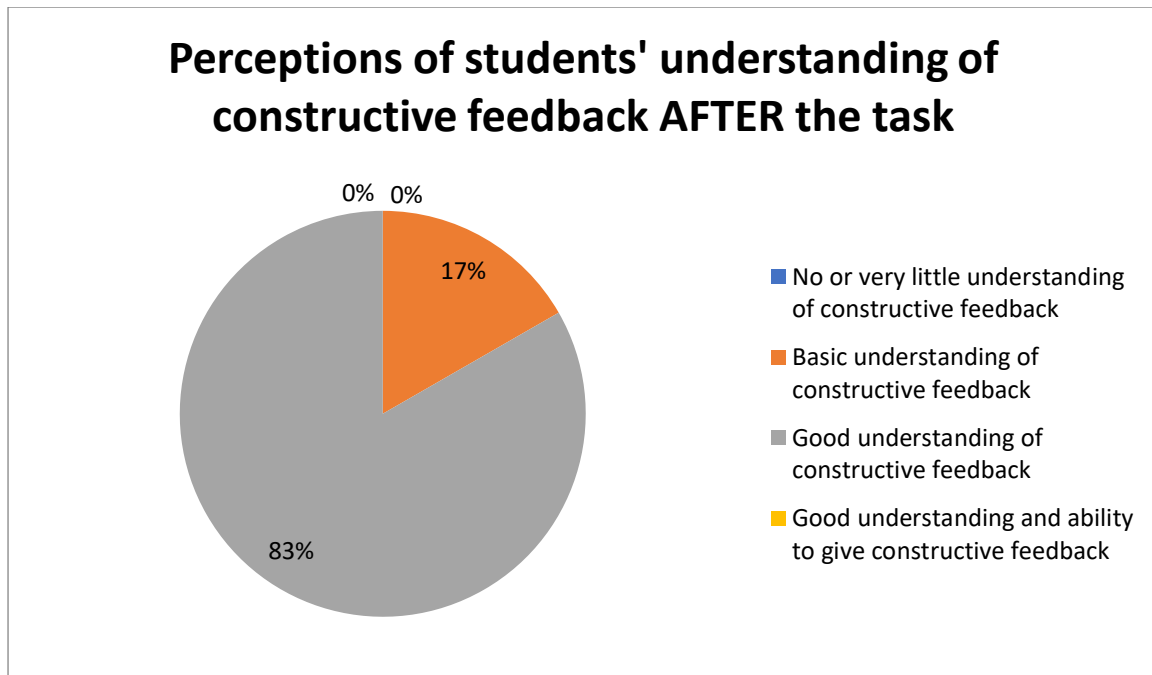


Fig. 13

This proposition is in line with some of the more open comments made by the students in reply to a question about the best feature of the course and suggested improvements. Interestingly, most students focused on aspects of the course structure and delivery but some commented on the content, recommending that more models and examples be given. Thus a revised version of the CFC in summer 2016 featured more extensive tutor feedback modelling the dialogical aspects and specificity of feedback, increased opportunities for inter-group feedback, and self-evaluation protocols for the peer reviewers to develop a better understanding of the disciplinary practices.

Conclusion

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) list three prerequisites for effective feedback – that it be detailed, promptly received, and understandable to students; and we would argue that it should also reflect relevant disciplinary academic literacies. Since ESAP courses often attend to the development of those in rather superficial ways, we feel that introducing a telecollaborative element with an associated CFC as outlined here may constitute a potentially useful response to the issue of content and context. Relevant training offered prior to the Project permits prospective peer reviewers to develop an understanding of the task, as well as opportunities and modelling for them to develop the necessary skills, before they step into the mentor's role. With some modifications, mostly directed at increasing reciprocity and

interactivity through introducing a dynamic, real-time, live form of input from the UK, the CFC could really help the student-mentors to develop a more nuanced understanding of the role of feedback in a SET context.

Pedagogically, the need for a two-way element to the feedback process seems clear. Snowball and Mostert (2013) point out that a constructivist paradigm, in which students can both see and comment on one another's feedback responses (and so further refine their understanding of the appropriate academic literacies), is of mutual benefit, going beyond what Nicol (2011) defines as mere 'delivery' (the UK participants as passive receivers). This would clearly require the students to see language as a resource rather than a mere instrument. The 'gatekeeping' element of the UK course remains the chief obstacle, but emphasizing the pedagogic value of bi-directional feedback may be the most effective way to ensure that *both* universities buy into any future expansion of the Gazan students' role.

We need to make this pedagogical case forcefully, as the underlying ethical dimension of non-reciprocity is less likely to serve as a motor for change within UK institutions "firmly located within a capitalist, market-oriented philosophy" (Pennycook, 1994:164). The EAST Project was deemed a 'success', because every single UK-based student passed, but they did so based on assessment oriented mainly toward the language. In other words, international students, despite being the 'privileged' beneficiaries of Glasgow's pre-sessional course, do not get a full opportunity of becoming acquainted with disciplinary literacies. What is even less ethical, however, is the fact that the participating Gaza-based students are unable to receive credits, let alone join their peers in the UK. It is very hard to put a developmental gloss on current pre-sessional practice in the UK, and this additional aspect of the Gaza-Glasgow 'partnership' certainly had an ethical dimension, of which we were aware throughout and which was only tangentially addressed by the CFC outlined above.

The system extant is, without doubt, doubly unfair. Any meaningful change will only be realised once Global South (in our case, Palestinian) students can also gain credits or (why not?) even travel to study within the partner institution. In lieu of these longer-term goals, we have set ourselves more immediate objectives for our next iterations of EAST. Firstly, the CFC should be adjusted to provide more opportunities for practice, so that the peer reviewers can confidently step into their role and become true stakeholders in Halliday's 'context of situation'. Secondly, the CFC needs a closer integration into the wider project, to foster more active participation; one possibility is to make the students co-researchers rather than mentors. Flattening the relationship means that the student would still provide peer feedback

but, by being immersed in the collaboration more equally, they may develop ownership of the project and so become motivated to engage in more productive work at the level of ideas and relevant disciplinary literacies, thus truly requiring the language to be seen as a resource. This may mean changes to the workload and set-up of such a course, and the ‘gatekeeping’ factor remains. But there is certainly potential in balancing gains by the reviewers and reviewees in student partnerships across borders and cultures as this would help to re-address the issue of development of disciplinary academic literacies as well as diminish the divisive line between the First World and Global South and thus account for ‘context of situation’ more fully.

References

- Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2007). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (3rd ed.) Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.
- Boughey, C. and S. McKenna (2016) Academic literacy and decontextualised learner. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), 1-9.
- Garrison, D.R. and Arbaugh, J.B. (2007). Researching the community of inquiry framework: Review, issues and future directions. *Internet and Higher Education*, 10 (2007), 157-172.
- Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T., Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education, *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2 (2–3), 87–105.
- Gibbs, G. and Simpson, C. (2004). Conditions under which assessment supports learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1, 3–31.
- Green, B. (1993) (Ed.) *The Insistence of the letter: literary studies and curriculum theorizing*. London: Falmer Press.
- Guariento, B., Almasri, N., and Rolinska, A. (2016) Investigating EAST, *Proceedings of the American Society for Engineering Education conference*, New Orleans.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2009). *The Essential Halliday*. London: Continuum.
- HESA (2017) <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/students-2015-16> Accessed 01/05/2017.
- Ladyshevsky, R. K. (2006). Peer Coaching: A constructivist methodology for enhancing critical thinking in postgraduate business education, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25/1, 67–84.
- Loureiro, M.J., Pombo, L., Moreira, A. (2012). The quality of peer assessment in a wiki-based online context: a qualitative study, *Educational Media International*, 49/2, 139-149.
- Merry, S. and Orsmond, P. (2008). Students’ Attitudes to and Usage of Academic Feedback Provided Via Audio Files, *BioScience Education Journal*, 11/3, 1-11.

- Nicol, D. (2010). From Monologue to Dialogue: Improving Written Feedback in Mass Higher Education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35/5, 501-517.
- Nicol, D. (2011). Developing the students' ability to construct feedback. Enhancement Themes - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/developing-students-ability-to-construct-feedback.pdf?sfvrsn=30> Accessed 30/08/2016.
- Nicol, D., Thomson, A. and Breslin, C. (2014). Rethinking feedback practices in higher education: a peer review exercise. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39/1, 102-122.
- Olson, V. L. B. (1990). The revising processes of sixth-grade writers with and without peer feedback. *Journal of Educational Research*, 84, 22-29.
- Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (2015) *Palestine in Figures 2014*, <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2115.pdf> Accessed 4/05/2016.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an international language*. London: Longman.
- Sadler, D.R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18, 119-144.
- Sadler, D.R. (2010). Beyond Feedback: Developing Student Capability in Complex Appraisal. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35/5, 535-550.
- Snowball, J.D.& Mostert, M. (2013). Dancing with the devil: formative peer assessment and academic performance, *Higher Education Research and Development*, 32:4, 645-659.
- Topping, K. J. (2009). Peer Assessment, *Theory Into Practice*, 48:1, 20-27.
- UCAS (2016). <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/postgraduate/postgraduate-study/international-students> Accessed 2/06/2016.
- World Bank (2014). http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/Factsheet_Gaza_ENG.pdf Accessed 2/04/2016.
- World Bank (2015). Main report. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2015/09/25081078/economic-monitoring-report-ad-hoc-liaison-committee-vol-2-main-report> Accessed 4/09/2016.

Paper 9:

‘Really Talking’ to Gaza: from Active to Transformative Learning in distributed environments and under highly pressured conditions

Anna Rolinska, Bill Guariento, Ghadeer Abouda and Ongkarn Nakprada³

The need for transformation in Gaza is enormous, and obvious. Economic isolation, particularly since the blockade initiated by Israel and Egypt in 2007, has brought truly existential economic challenges. On top of this, its inhabitants have had to confront regular military attacks leading to thousands of civilian deaths. A corollary of these intense physical hardships has been emotional and psychological impacts, born not just of poverty and the violence endured, but also of the near-impossibility of egress from Gaza.

Such physical and psychological impacts would be expected to militate against successful involvement in international collaborative projects. Mezirow (2000: 15) states explicitly that “hungry, homeless, desperate, threatened, sick or frightened adults are less likely to be able to participate effectively in discourse.” This seems almost to have been written with the everyday suffering within Gaza in mind yet, as we shall see in this chapter, the opposite holds true. Despite severe limitations on movement out of and into Gaza, engineering students from the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) have proven eminently able to ‘participate effectively in discourse’, skilfully using online spaces for this purpose. What is more, this collaboration across borders, cultures and languages proved of mutual benefit, both to them and to peers overseas.

Since 2015, each summer, engineering students from IUG have partnered online with graduates in similar disciplines on the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) strand of the pre-session course at the University of Glasgow (UofG). Together, they have investigated a series of engineering-related challenges from the Gaza Strip which the IUG students identify as the most urgent or interesting. This ‘English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) Project’ was devised to simulate an experiential learning environment in which the students can engage in their disciplinary discourses, practices and

³ The chapter was written collaboratively by four authors. Two were lecturers and course-organisers at the University of Glasgow. Two at the time were participants in the project, and provided the case-studies. In the course of this chapter we will refer to the lecturers/course-organisers as ‘we’, and to the case-study providers directly by name, respectively Ghadeer (from Gaza) and Ongkarn (from Thailand, but studying in Glasgow).

processes and thus develop their identity as engineers. The preliminary analysis of the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours displayed by the students in the project, and presented in this chapter, highlights the importance of active learning in higher education, particularly in socio-politico-economically challenged contexts, and its transformative potential.

This chapter outlines the original 2015 pilot EAST Project (the three iterations of the EAST Project that have been held since then are described in ‘Reflections on three years of Glasgow-Gaza pre-sessional English collaboration’, in this volume), focussing on the active learning precepts that underlie its pedagogy. Using the post-course student-survey, it looks specifically at students’ progress made in terms of communication, team-working and problem-solving, skills representative of the 3D Global Engineering Competencies proposed by Patil and Codner (2007). It then moves on to examine in detail two case-studies (one each from Gaza and Glasgow), providing exemplars of potentially transformative outcomes which emerged from the active learning precepts of the course. The data is analysed in close relation to multiple contextual challenges which the participants had to tackle on a regular basis.

Active Learning

Conceptually, active learning is an umbrella term that “involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991:2). This broad but widely accepted definition links active learning to learning activities, instructional strategies, teaching methods, and pedagogical approaches that are intended to activate or develop the students’ thinking in the learning process. Examples of these include, but are not limited to: group discussions, case studies, collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and inquiry-based learning. The principles supporting the flipped classroom approach, in which students undertake preparatory reading and research activities at home, allowing class time to become an opportunity for them to actually externalise these competencies, are also grounded in theoretical understandings of active learning (e.g. Meyers & Jones, 1993; Silberman, 1996).

What these teaching approaches have in common is that they allow the students to “negotiate, construct, and reconstruct new meanings from the contributions of others, in a genuine process of shared knowledge construction” (Mayordomo and Onrubia, 2015: 96). Apart from exchanging ‘hard’ or ‘core’ knowledge, such initiatives also facilitate the development of various soft skills and attributes, which are sought after in students and graduates by their

lecturers and prospective employers. For example, in its Graduate Attributes Matrix⁴, UofG promises to produce students who are ‘experienced in working in groups and teams of varying sizes and in a variety of roles’, and able to ‘conduct themselves professionally and contribute positively when working in a team’. This closely reflects employers’ needs. For example, in a survey conducted among Australian employers, oral communication, written communication, capacity to learn new skills, capacity for cooperation and teamwork and interpersonal skills with colleagues and clients were rated as the most important skills for engineering graduates (Nair et al., 2009). The opportunities for active learning have of course been greatly enhanced by the potential offered by digital platforms, and present-day learning and working environments will expect participants to work online, and with others, as stipulated by the Digital Capabilities Frameworks created by Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC, 2017)⁶.

As English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecturers working in a British Higher Education institution, our role is to ensure that overseas students develop the necessary language and study skills to comfortably function on their prospective degree programmes. However, we also believe that through devising active learning interventions, we can help our students to socialise into their prospective disciplinary communities and start to develop their disciplinary and professional identity. Introducing the telecollaboration with Gaza was our attempt to directly actualise that need as it provided what in our view was authentic, real-world contextualisation of the course content.

The EAST Project

The first iteration of the EAST Project was a relatively small-scale online collaboration pilot run in July/August 2015. Twenty Palestinian students and 37 Glasgow-based overseas students (80% of whom were from China, Saudi Arabia, or Brazil), divided into small groups, collaborated on authentic and highly contextualised SET-related scenarios from the Gaza Strip. The IUG students proposed scenarios to be investigated, then acted as critical friends, providing content-oriented support throughout the five-week project.

⁴ Online: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183776_en.pdf accessed 13 February 2019

⁵ Online: <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/building-digital-capability> accessed 13 February 2019

⁶ A government initiative whose remit is to enhance the digital capabilities of UK research institutions.

Traditional teaching methods remain strongly teacher-led around the world, and for many of the participating students, whether in Glasgow or Gaza, this course represented a first systematic exposure to active learning precepts. The IUG participants were trained in an important aspect of active learning via a purpose-built intensive online preparatory course in providing constructive feedback⁷, prior to teaming up with their partners in Glasgow. Based on the guidance from their peer mentors in Gaza, the students in Glasgow analysed and evaluated possible solutions to the challenges within each scenario. As the course developed, communication and collaboration depended on a range of digital platforms, ranging from WiziQ for synchronous group events, via Facebook and Skype used for ongoing communication, to Google Docs which served as a space for collaborative writing. This variety was designed to overcome the regular power outages in Gaza, and any accessibility issues, as well as enable rapidity of interaction. The collaboration culminated when the students in Glasgow delivered presentations to the audience in Gaza via a videoconference link. Audience members in both Gaza and Glasgow were able to ask the presenters questions. On the final day of the project, students at IUG joined with their digital friends in Glasgow in an online party, and some IUG students showed videos they had made in illustration of the issues they had been working on (for further information, see: <https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>).

Course survey results

The course had a significant immediate impact on the students, both in Glasgow and Gaza. In an end-of-project survey, with an 81% rate of completion, the students from both universities commented on a range of positive outcomes of the participation, such as development of digital literacies, extensive language practice, enhancement of content knowledge, engagement with real-world issues, and opportunities to work within international teams.

In this section, we focus on the three areas most relevant to active learning: the development of *communication*, *team-working*, and *problem-solving* skills, in each case illustrating quantitative findings with relevant comments from the students. We will then build on these findings via two case studies, and evaluate them in terms of possible transformative effects.

⁷ Online: <https://goo.gl/ifxdh7> accessed 13 February 2019

Communication skills

The majority of the students perceived the course as beneficial for the development of their communication skills (Table 1).

Table 1: To what extent was the project useful in developing your communication skills?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	56.5	55.6	57.9
Quite useful	37	44.4	26.3
A little useful	6.5	0	15.8
Not useful	0	0	0

The open comments reveal that there were different reasons for such assessment. Since both IUG and UofG students had normally worked in monolingual groups, which can make using a foreign language slightly awkward, they appeared to appreciate being put in a situation in which communication in English was the only possible means of conveying meaning (students' comments from the survey have been presented unedited for spelling and/or grammar).

Our group was formed by 3 students of different nationalities. So we needed to speak just in English and be as clear as possible (UofG student).

Specific references to the affective issues related to communication were made, too:

I think I have courage now to try speaking English without spend a lot of time to order the words in my mind or be afraid of grammars faults (IUG student).

The active learning-related value of working to deadline, within a structured project, was also noted:

Presenting a work of a subject I barely knew five weeks before, to people I did not know, with different backgrounds and cultural characteristics requires twice more preparation than to present a known subject to my peers (UofG student).

Keeping in touch with people that I newly know them, and when they ask me help it is really important that how I feel that I should help them, even if I was so tired and just arrived from work or even have to work on something else (IUG student).

For some, the need for regular communication brought concomitant (and perhaps at first challenging) issues of appropriacy:

At first, I didn't know how to communicate with foreigners online and I needed to check whether it was an appropriate phrase before talking to them. But I don't worry about that now, because I don't think it's so difficult (UofG student).

Finally, opportunities for the development of subject-specific language proved of significance too:

We have been pushed to move on the topic by expressing what you think and improved our spoken English in the process (UofG student).

All the comments point clearly to the students developing communicative competency within their disciplinary and professional communities.

Team-working skills

A crucial element of active learning is the ability to work alongside others. Specifically, regarding engineers, Schaeffer et al. (2012: 385) state that “learning is inherently social, which makes student interaction an important part of education”, hence the engineering educator will ideally include activities that promote dialogue and teamwork, and that recognise the value of both product *and* process. As Table 2 shows, the students perceived the EAST Project as being of considerable value in this respect.

Table 2: To what extent was the project useful in developing your team working skills?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	54.3	55.6	52.6
Quite useful	39.1	37	42.1
A little useful	6.5	7.4	5.3

Not useful	0	0	0
------------	---	---	---

The students' open comments allow us to unpack a little what they actually learnt about processes related to team work, for instance the significance of active listening, knowledge construction, and task management:

The solution was the main part to show that skill. Each of us would persuade others that her or his solution could be helpful for current situation in Gaza. communication, argument and clarification were all the positive results of co-working (UofG student).

It allowed me to share my thoughts with others and work on the distribution of work between us more... (IUG student).

Problem-solving skills

Choices in the world beyond academia are not in the main binary and involve interaction with challenges that present many facets. If a course can combine measurable outcomes while allowing the students the liberty to express themselves and to take risks, it will be likely to foster the active learning skills that the student will encounter in his/her post-university career amongst the complex and untidy problems of the workplace.

The engineering-related situations provided by the Gazan students demanded an active learning approach, as the most obvious responses proposed by the Glasgow-based students were inappropriate in the majority of cases, given the constraints of life in Gaza; for example, to solve the problem of waste disposal UofG students would suggest building a waste treatment plant, which is an unfeasible solution due to lack of building materials in the Gaza Strip, resulting from longstanding and ongoing border closure. As Daly et al. (2014: 418) put it, "to encourage students to embrace ambiguity, avoid premature closure, and increase reflection may greatly improve their creative skills". As the students were, in many cases, working across SET-related specialisations (i.e. outside their specific fields of expertise), the need for negotiation and problem-solving was, if anything, enhanced, as demonstrated by the statistics from Table 3 and more open comments below:

Table 3: To what extent was the project useful in developing your problem-solving skills?

	All participants (%)	UofG participants (%)	IUG participants (%)
Very useful	56.5	66.7	42.1
Quite useful	34.8	29.6	42.1
A little useful	8.7	33.3	15.8
Not useful	0	0	0

I like how they give different solutions and then start to compare and contrast between the possible solutions. This was great (IUG student).

I always have these problem i never get to solve problems well... but in these project when we had some problem everyone has his own way to deal with it i really took benefits in this i learned how to think first then take actions (IUG student).

These comments suggest the potential offered by a socio-constructivist framework (Ligorio et al, 2011) for the students, who may be better able in their post-EAST careers to work with future colleagues in an authentic negotiation, construction and reconstruction of knowledge and new meanings, making use of the active learning nature of their involvement in problem-solving gained during the EAST project.

We feel that the statistics and comments above suggest that the course was seen as having met the three key indicators of active learning by a majority of the participants, and that the Gazan students' contribution was absolutely central to the success of the EAST project, allowing them to work effectively as mentors for Glasgow-based students who came to the project with little or no basic knowledge of the Palestinian context. They were able to clarify queries from Glasgow with patience, and participated with resilience and dedication to overcome challenges regarding internet connections, power outages, and their own outside commitments.

While the conclusions that we were able to draw from the survey may be generalizable, they are also lack specificity, focusing on an overall evaluation of the project rather than offering a detailed picture of how the students actually operate in learning environments that are open, volatile and distributed. We were interested to know what the project really involved on the

part of the students and, even more importantly, whether the undoubted challenges of the course might have provoked longer-term and more deep-seated *transformative* benefits among any of the participants. The next section provides a short literature review of transformational learning before we describe the methods used to gain a deeper insight into the students' learning during EAST.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning is an area of study first outlined in the 1980s and its development since then has followed on work largely initiated by Jack Mezirow. He posited learning as a process of “using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action” (1996: 162) and suggested that beliefs and worldviews can change as a result of what he termed ‘disorienting dilemmas’, or experiences at odds with a person's current beliefs about the world. As a result of such a dilemma, a person may be brought to recalibrate these beliefs in order to reconcile the new experience with the worldview already extant, i.e. be forced to transform what he termed ‘problematic frames of reference’. These frames of reference “provide us with a sense of stability, coherence, community, and identity. Consequently, they are often emotionally charged and strongly defended” (Mezirow, 2000: 18). However, precisely because they carry so much significance, a *successfully challenged* frame of reference can lead to the subject's becoming “more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2003: 58). We felt that the challenges inherent in a timebound, intensive and highly collaborative project such as EAST would provide participants with potential ‘disorienting dilemmas’ and offer the chance to interact with peers who may have been undergoing a similar process of development.

Though Mezirow can be considered to have founded the field of transformative learning, suggestions for ways to build on and modify his original precepts have subsequently been provided by other researchers, and three are of particular relevance to the EAST Project.

Firstly, Clark and Wilson (1991: 76) suggest that Mezirow was failing to “maintain the essential link between the meaning of experience and the *context* in which it arises and by which it is interpreted”. The italics are ours, as they highlight one of the conceptual foundations of EAST, i.e. the absolute need to ground research into engineering problems

within the socio-political setting (i.e. the ‘context’) that has produced them. A relevant educational experience should not be limited to the classroom, but should look to the surrounding areas and people as parts of the learning environment. The online nature of EAST offered potential for transformation that would allow participants to collaborate regardless of time and place. We hoped that this foregrounding of context, combined with the use of ICT, would lead to broader communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), i.e. members of social groups sharing interests, knowledge and concerns, and the development of stimulating knowledge-building communities, in which individual growth takes place alongside (and as a result of) the growth in knowledge of the wider group.

Beyond the possibility that he was neglecting the importance of context, others have suggested that Mezirow’s original theory of transformative learning also underemphasised the potential for *social-emancipatory* transformation. Kegan (1994: 34), for instance, talks of the need to transform our epistemologies, “liberating ourselves from that in which we were embedded, making what was a subject into object to that we can ‘have it’ rather than ‘be had’ by it – this is the most powerful way I know to conceptualize the growth of the mind.” This foregrounding of people as subjects, needing and able to constantly reflect on and aim for social transformation, thus allows the oppressed to demythicise reality and to develop what Freire (1970) termed ‘conscientization’, or a critical consciousness. It is a form of pedagogy that necessitates democratic engagement, utilising Freire’s ideas of *dialogic* education rather than a ‘banking’ model in which students are just receiving and repeating ready-digested information, and the desire to bring Glasgow-based students (the majority of whom originate from positions of relative societal privilege) face-to-face with authentic challenges that confront students and societies in the Global South has also been one of the principles of EAST from the outset.

Thirdly, in his original iteration of transformative learning, Mezirow (2000: 22) suggested that, following the disorienting dilemma, transformations often require clarifications involving a phase of meaning that involves “self-conception and self-examination”, but scholars have subsequently built on and suggested revisions to this precept, too. Dix, for example (2016: 143) suggests that “transformation may occur even if it involves little *self-awareness* but is instead wholly or mostly *problem-focussed*” (italics in original). Focus on the problematic situation might be “just as emotionally intense, disorienting, critically exploratory, and meta cognitively critical of previous ways of thinking and just as strongly

motivating, as would a challenge to one's self-conception and self-evaluation" (ibid). We felt that the centrality of the problem (as outlined by Dix) to potential for transformative learning married well with a third key organisational principle of EAST; the project is based around a Situation-Problem-Response-Evaluation (SPRE) structure, a common report pattern identified in studies of discourse analysis (Winter 1976 in Hoey, 1986); in the case of the EAST project, the students from Glasgow are provided with a Situation in Gaza, inherent within which lies an engineering Problem. By working with their Gazan peers, the Glasgow students undertake library and internet-based research to determine their Responses, which they then write-up and present orally, alongside their Gazan peers: the Evaluation. This SPRE structure, combined with a collaborative and process-oriented approach, requires dialogue, compromise, and group action. Critical questions are necessary, as is the need to look beyond sources offered by a structured curriculum. Whatever pooled information that is therefore found needs to be used, collectively, to solve the initial problem.

In short, we hoped that the real-life contextualisation, the key Global South focus, and the centrality of the problem-situation within the project, would make it particularly suited to an exploration of transformative learning. The students would work together, negotiating meaning with their peers in Glasgow and in Gaza, and by so doing develop deeper understanding. By encouraging learners to take opportunities for critical reflection, and by following up on their experiences subsequent to the course, we hoped to find out whether and to what extent the learners involved in the case studies would have been able to act on the recalibration of their 'frames of reference'.

The case-study method

Our desire was to use the Glasgow-Gaza EAST Project to make pedagogy more stimulating, leading to engaged, active, critical students, willing to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning. Since the survey results seemed to be in line with our hopes of developing a more authentic learning environment, we were curious to find out more about the transformative potential of EAST and whether there was any effect beyond the project duration and into the students' subsequent study or work.

To uncover the nature of behaviours, actions, attitudes, beliefs and values, we used ethnomethodology as the methodological basis of our investigation. This meant the students

engaging in the ‘study of work’ (Psathas, 1995: 139–155) themselves, whereby ‘work’ refers to the EAST Project and how the students accomplished it within the parameters and constraints of the project. In other words, and using Garfinkel’s definition of ethnomethodology, we asked our students to reflect on “the things that persons in particular situations do, the methods they use, to create the patterned orderliness of social life” (2002: 4). This seemed to resonate with the active learning framework too (see Bonwell and Eison, 1991).

To recruit student co-researchers, we announced a call for voluntary participation. We were aware that the students who would positively respond to our request were likely to be curious, reflective and self-directed by nature, introducing bias. We decided though that a benefit of gaining deeper insights into students’ engagement in the project outweighs the risk of skewing the interpretation and so justifies the adoption of this intensity type of purposive sampling (Coe, 2012).

The response rate was low, perhaps due to the fact that the students were already back studying and therefore busy, and there was a self-selection inherent in the process, with more mature and reflective participants likely to offer their time and involvement. We chose one female participant from Gaza to work with us – Ghadeer - and, for the sake of balance of representation of genders, educational and cultural backgrounds, we approached a male Thai participant from Glasgow - Ongkarn.

To account for the time that passed between the end of the project and the reflection as well as to give the students some structure to guide them in their reflecting process, we used the UofG Graduate Attributes Matrix, referenced before. The students were asked whether the EAST Project had brought them any opportunities for development of any of the attributes and if so, in what way. We were particularly interested in any critical incidents or ‘disorienting dilemmas’ that may have arisen during the project, i.e. moments when students face a situation or a problem that is a real challenge. In the process of overcoming this problem, the students would be likely to learn something about the subject they are studying, perhaps also something about the wider educational context in which they are studying, their whole approach to study (i.e. what does it mean to truly ‘know’ something) or even about themselves, as people. Such transformative moments could have occurred either during the

Project itself or some time afterwards as long as they can be linked in some way to the project participation.

To facilitate the ‘study of work’ we opted for Kolb’s action-reflection model: initial or new experience, reflection and observation, development of a new concept, and experimentation. To deepen the reflections, we encouraged the students to consider ‘the larger context, the meaning, and the implications of an experience or action’ (Branch & Paranjape, 2002: 1185). The students had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the framework through a presentation and conversation with us. Then they wrote their reflections on which we commented, trying to tease out details, motivations and implications. They had an opportunity to respond to our questions and suggestions and it was their choice whether they would act on our ‘feedback’ and how they would do that. Throughout this dialogic process, we, as authors and researchers in this study, were mindful of our own position as two university lecturers and the power dynamics within the relationship between us and the participating students. Similarly, in seeking to answer our research questions about the value of active learning and its potential for transformative learning, we strove to be conscious at all times of how our position as insiders embedded within the story of the project may have coloured our interpretations (Lather, 1991).

Case studiess

Case study 1 submitted by Ghadeer

Ghadeer investigated Optical Recognition Technology with a group of three UofG students in summer 2015.

After the first get-to-know-each-other conference with my UofG colleagues, we held two meetings to discuss the problem with the optical recognition software in more detail. I outlined the points that I thought were very important to address during the research work. We discussed and explained them quite thoroughly, or at least I thought we did. The UofG students seemed to be engaging with the problem during the discussions. Therefore, I concluded that nothing else was needed and we could start writing the report. A week later

⁸ The case studies have been edited, for conciseness of expression.

one of my Glasgow friends sent me a Facebook message requesting an additional meeting to discuss the idea further. He also claimed that they needed answers to a few questions and ideas. I thought the answers had been given and discussed from different perspectives in the earlier meetings so their need to go through them again puzzled me. Immediately, many conflicting thoughts came to my mind. What else would be needed? Did not we explain everything to each other? Something must have gone amiss though since they were asking for more clarification. Did that mean I lacked the skills needed for teaching and guidance? I also suddenly became worried that they would not do well in the report because of me lacking an ability to give clear explanations. I suddenly felt very uncomfortable about my performance and I blamed myself for inadequate contribution. I had chosen to join EAST project to contribute something useful and share my knowledge with others. For me, teaching was one of important tasks during the project I felt responsible for my team and their performance.

Despite those feelings of self-blame, guilt and weakened confidence, I decided to handle the situation in a professional way. After all, that was supposed to be my role in the project. I was the one who had proposed the problem and I should explain it clearly and in a more scientific way, even if it meant another ten meetings. Therefore, I sent a message to my UofG partners stating my availability which depended on the electricity supply in Gaza.

We arranged to meet in two days. I tried to prepare myself for the meeting and to predict the points that would need more elaboration. Generally, the computational methods from our scenario seemed to cause most difficulty, particularly for those members who did not specialise in computer science, and so I predicted they would probably have to be discussed again. In the previous meetings we had just held a discussion so I decided to follow a different approach by using other exploratory methods. Namely, I sketched a diagram of the system architecture and specified the main functionality of each step and component. I also developed a list of reading resources and tutorials that I thought would be helpful in explaining the problem in more depth.

At the meeting, I showed the sketch to my team and used it to revise the main research themes. My team seemed more engaged with the ideas and decided they were ready to start writing the report. They sent it to me to ensure they had covered all ideas. The report was impressive. They explained each point effectively. They referenced important resources. They handled the problem from different perspectives and they did it better than I had expected.

They pointed out the importance of the problem considering the Gazan context and proposed excellent solutions. For instance, they noted that the optical character recognition technique provides the basis for important software products that serve blind people and help them read books and articles by transforming the text to audio so they can listen to the content. In Gaza, the number of blind people is on the increase because many have suffered from the low quality medical services in local hospitals, the lack of healthcare equipment and facilities, in addition to the difficulties of traveling to pursue treatment outside Gaza.

Moreover, the students delivered a great presentation during the seminar day, the most amazing presentation of all the EAST groups! They received many positive comments from the audience and from the Palestinian ambassador who happened to be visiting Glasgow at the time. They were able to respond to every question and convince everybody of their expertise even though they had been completely new to the topic a few weeks earlier.

This incident was important because the EAST Project was supposed to be completed in a limited time and they had to write their report and their presentation in addition to their regular coursework. That is why I invested all my available time to help them and tried to be supportive rather than create an additional obstacle. Without me realising and reflecting on the initial misunderstanding, we might have needed more time and they would have probably failed to meet the submission deadlines. I was prepared to do that even though it put a lot of pressure on my personality. I realized that the leader should use more engaging methods when interacting and collaborating with her team. She should follow up on the team input as early as possible and be sensitive to their specific needs. Moreover, she should pay attention to the variations in study backgrounds of her team members. For instance, I did not take into account that each member in my group had a different specialism. Not everyone studied computer science and if I had realised that earlier, it would have made a big difference. To sum up, the leaders should be aware of their team's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the leader should adopt diverse communication media to facilitate team collaboration. Although we used Skype calls for communicating during the EAST project, I should also have used some written and visual materials to facilitate comprehension in every possible way, and allow the students to have a useful reference point at times I was unable to go online due electricity shortages. I also understood there was no problem with the team as they were very active throughout our collaboration, but in the learning context I believe the learner should

be convinced of the importance of information in order to look for it and properly engage with it.

Moreover, although our EAST group did not follow any predetermined or hierarchical structure, the teamwork was achieved in a seamless, coherent manner. I was in charge of posing the research questions, ensuring the ideas' coverage, evaluating the team's achievements and reflections, whereas each of the Glasgow colleagues had to analyse, elaborate, and write on a specific research question. I naturally took on a role of a manager too helping my teammates to identify tasks and stay on track. The implicit role of managing necessitated the duty towards the team. The team leader in a research project should determine what and when the team should take the next step during research work. Initially, I thought that my team was ready for the report writing phase, but I was wrong. I should have ensured they understood the topic, the problem domain and the research questions first. I should have let them speak and share their ideas. The successful team leader in a research project should know the research path and establish a big picture of the problem and, throughout the meetings, she must ensure all the members are on the same page. And that was what I succeeded in doing in the end.

Overall, this incident had a positive impact on me developing a set of skills needed to be a successful and effective researcher, which is my future career. In future, I will teach a new curriculum to new students, and I am hoping to put what I have learnt through this incident in action. I am going to try to enrich the lectures with the collaborative learning methods to increase students' participation. I will ask the students to form groups and hold regular meetings so that they can speak for themselves and reflect on their progress on each piece of coursework.

Case study 2 submitted by Ongkarn

Ongkarn examined lack of addresses in Gaza city with two fellow UofG students and two IUG students in summer 2017.

Before the EAST Project, I barely knew anything about Gaza. I just knew that Gaza is a city located in the Middle East and always engaged in conflicts. During the project, I and my UofG teammates were assigned a scenario of the lack of addresses in Gaza. Our Gazan

partners were computer engineering students. We communicated via Facebook and Skype. We contacted our Gazan peers and asked them about the current situation in regard to the problem. However, their initial explanation was not clear enough to help us understand the challenge. Therefore, our team brainstormed and made a list of more detailed questions which we sent to Gaza. Our peers' answers provided a more detailed explanation of the background situation, the problem itself and possible suggestions of how to approach it. This helped us understand better what the 'lack of addresses in the Gaza Strip' actually meant. However, we still felt we were held back by the lack of a basic understanding of the Gazan circumstances and so struggled to develop a clear and comprehensive picture of the assigned problem. Therefore, based on the information we had received from our peers, I decided to create a diagram that would gather and organise all the information we had in a visual way (Fig. 1).

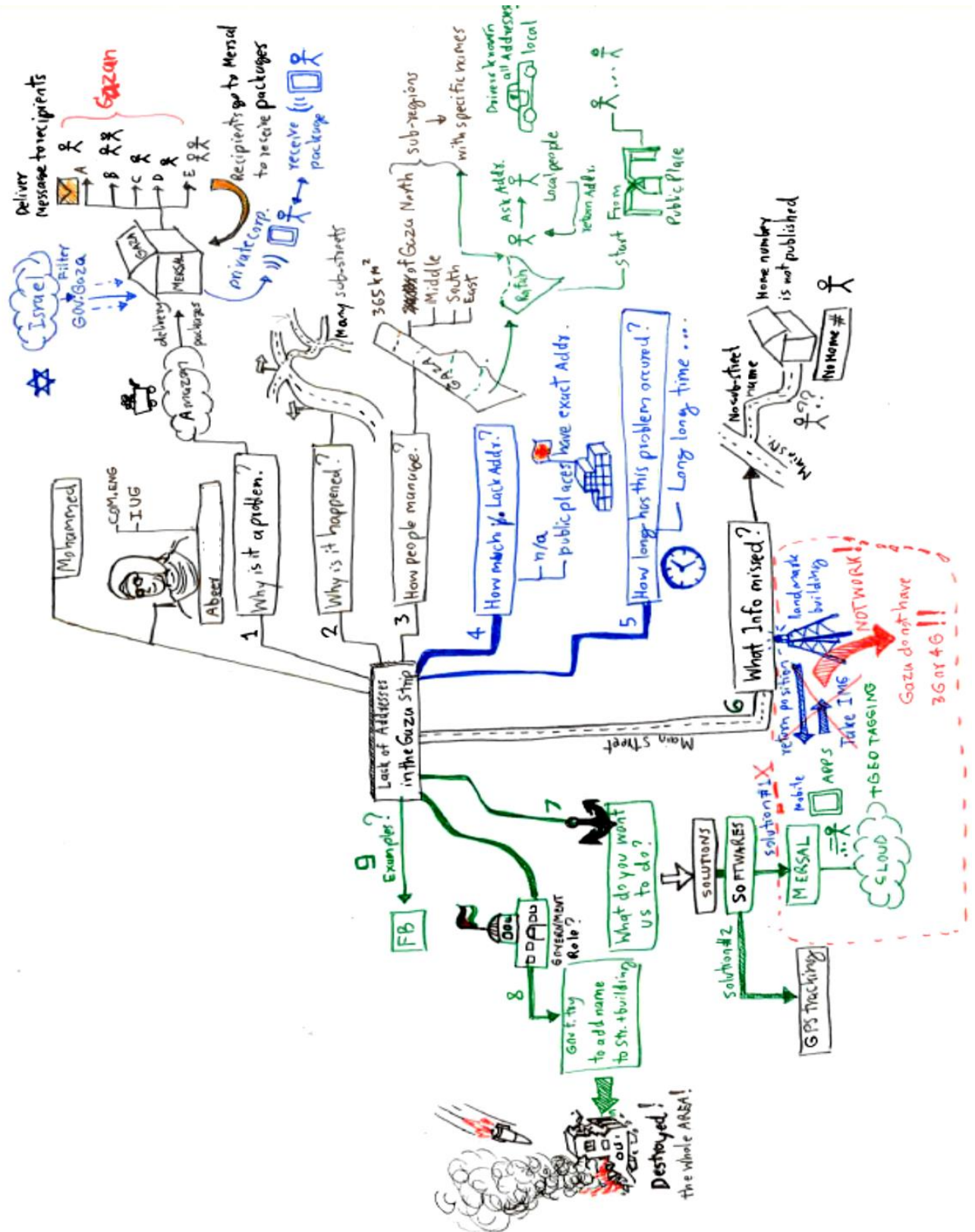


Figure 1. A visual mindmap gathering and organising the information about the Gazan scenario

The diagram takes the form of a mindmap with each branch being a summary of our peers' answers to our initial questions, marked with numbers for easier reference. For example, node number 1 gathers information in reply to the question why the lack of addresses is a problem. The delivery service is provided by a private company called 'Mersal'. Since there is no effective way of delivering packages and parcels, what Mersal does is notify the recipient that there is a parcel waiting for them in the courier office and they have to collect it by themselves. Node number 8, on the other hand, deals with the government role in alleviating the problem. While the government does acknowledge that the problem exists, establishing a modern address system even in parts of the city is very challenging. Due to the ongoing conflict with Israel, whole blocks of buildings (can) get destroyed in attacks, and if they do, the addresses (would) disappear too.

Using this visual method helped our team consolidate and fine-tune our understanding of the situation in Gaza and how the different aspects were linked with each other. Then, each team member tried to explore possible options to address this problem. After a period of study, we had several possible methods which we evaluated together in order to filter out which were least likely to succeed. This way we identified three solutions which in our opinion were the most useful. We presented them to our peers in Gaza via a Skype link. Our partners indicated that some of the proposed methods may not work in Gaza due to the lack of supporting infrastructure required for our solutions to work, for example 3G connectivity. This was an illuminating moment and probably the most valuable lesson during the project. While dealing with engineering problems in low-resource development contexts, practical and economic aspects have to be carefully considered. From that moment onward, such constraints remained at the forefront of my mind whenever I worked on any project.

Participating in the EAST Project equipped me with other skills too as it offered 'lessons' that would be difficult to find elsewhere. First and foremost, I gained experience in working as a team, with peers from different cultures, and also across physical borders, which meant working in technology-mediated environments. Additionally, my partners in Gaza, despite the hardship they were continuously exposed to, seemed unfazed by their circumstances, which provided me with a great model of resilience and determination. The practice this gave me in cross-cultural communication and online collaboration proved very useful during my subsequent MSc study at the UofG School of Computing Science. As part of my post-graduate study I had to complete a number of group assignments which required me to work with

randomly assigned peers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, e.g. Scottish, Swedish, Polish or Taiwanese. Thanks to the collaborative experience during the EAST Project I found it easier to get accustomed to their different English accents and working styles and so I could collaborate in more successfully.

Discussion

Ghadeer's journey seems to embody the transformative learning process as outlined by Mezirow, who talks about "using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (1996: 162). When he describes beliefs and worldviews that can change as a result of what he terms 'disorienting dilemmas', or experiences at odds with a person's current beliefs about the world, it seems to capture what Ghadeer experienced during EAST. But what is worth emphasising is Ghadeer's sense of responsibility and the split identity of the engineer and the teacher. These were both strong identities, though perhaps the added sense of ownership provided by the latter role meant that the 'frame of reference' was successfully challenged and, as a result, Ghadeer became "more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2003: 58). An interesting question is whether such a successful challenge can occur without any external interference or internal inclinations/tendencies: to what extent was Ghadeer's transformative experience driven by the 'hand-holding' done by us (and we had a particular agenda too) and by the availability of the structured guidance; and to what extent did her personality traits and personal circumstances contribute. She seems to have invested a lot into the project, seeing it as one of the ways/windows to peek at the outside world. She is a strong student in terms of self-direction, driven also by her teaching inclination, and is, perhaps, reflective by nature. One can speculate that she would have realised that the varied methods of presenting complex data are likely to work better than instructive approach based on one medium. Her teaching identity seems to have been well formed at the time so perhaps she was already sensitised to any opportunity to develop in this respect and (subconsciously?) looking for opportunities to develop the teaching craft. Also of interest are questions of emotional intelligence and empathy and the role they play in the process, and perhaps also the emotional resilience (or '*sumud*') particular to Palestinian students, and mentioned elsewhere in this volume.

Ongkarn is slightly different since he had used mindmaps before, as his default when thinking and processing information. The interesting question for the outsider concerns his own awareness regarding the effectiveness of the method. Maybe he is (vaguely aware) but lacks the ability to articulate it. Perhaps he thinks it is something normal and so tends to ignore the effectiveness of his mindmapping. It would be interesting to know what his team mates thought of it and how they evaluated it. As outsiders, we course-organisers could see that the mindmaps produced by Ongkarn were visible within the essays produced by the team-members, and clearly of great use, in the three separately written subject-specific essays that were handed in for evaluation at the end of EAST. Ongkarn's autonomy meant that the guidance given to him was minimal - in a way this is strange, as the linguistically stronger student (Ghadeer) was given more guidance than the less strong one. While we are not saying that he didn't experience transformation, he seems to fit less easily into Mezirow's (1996) description, and maybe more into the revised version by Dix (2016), which loosens the link between transformation and self-awareness and suggests that transformation is usually problem-focussed. It appears that Ongkarn (despite his clear shock at the level of destruction in Gaza) approached the issue less emotionally than Ghadeer, and seemed to focus on the problem. Alternative explanations for this are of course possible, with gender and cultural background potential factors at play, but it does however appear that Ghadeer (understandably) saw the issue from a more personal perspective.

While it is interesting to use Dix's broader definition of transformative learning, a worry is that the educator may take for granted that if the right conditions are created (active learning, SPRE) then transformative learning will happen unaided. Is this the case? For us, the key question is, to what extent can a student undergo transformation without being explicitly guided to reflect on the process, and to what extent this is related to being able to articulate clearly that they have undergone some sort of transformation? A related issue follows on from this: how much of the transformation goes unnoticed, unreflected on, and can any student regardless of their personality experience such transformation? A further question is whether less reflective or self-directed students can be led to transformation, and parity and equality can be ensured if the starting positions for individual students are different (for whatever reasons)?

Conclusion

In his introduction to issues surrounding transformative learning, Kagan (1994) posits two greatest yearnings in human experience: to be included, and to have a sense of agency. Human beings are essentially relational, or as Mezirow (2000: 27) puts it, “our identity is formed in webs of affiliation within a shared life world.” Clearly there is a value in ‘being included’, and the comments and case-studies here suggest that this ‘web of affiliation’ can be provided, *faut de mieux*, by online collaboration. The EAST project is flawed, in that it offers a lot of inclusion to the participants in Gaza – to quote Belenky et al. (1986: 143) “really talking” – but significantly less agency. Yet the case studies examined here suggest that, despite these asymmetries in benefits⁹, EAST has been of value, and not only those in Glasgow looking forward to their future studies in Scotland. The project work creates a safe place for students to work collaboratively, to debate, disagree, compromise and resolve problems and, notably, this has been made possible in online environments and through a language that is not native to either group. EAST lacks the pressures of the real world but, crucially, working with and within contextual constraints can enable participants working on engineering challenges to figure themselves out, perhaps transformatively: who they are, what they do, and (we hope) what they stand for.

⁹ For a discussion of the power imbalances which make it difficult for the Glasgow and Gazan partners to participate in EAST as true equals, see Guariento, W. in this volume (and the following paper in this thesis).

References

- Bonwell, C.C. & Eison, J.A. (1991) Active learning: creating excitement in the classroom, Association for the Study of Higher Education, George Washington University, USA.
- Branch, W.T. Jr. and Paranjape A. (2002) Feedback and reflection: teaching methods for clinical settings, *Acad Med.* 2002 Dec 77 (12 Pt 1), 1185-8.
- Nair, C.S., Patil, A. & Mertova, P. (2009) Re-engineering graduate skills – a case study, *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 34(2), 131-139.
- Clark, M.C. & Wilson A.L (1991) Context and Rationality in Mezirow's Theory of Transformational Learning, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(2), 75-91.
- Coe, R. (2012). Conducting your research (Chapter 6). In: J. Arthur, M. Waring, R. Coe and L.V. Hedges (Eds) *Research Methods & Methodologies in Education*. Sage: London, 41-52.
- Daly, S.R., Mosyjowski, E.A., Seifert, C.M. (2014) Teaching creativity in Engineering courses, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 103/3, 417-449.
- Dix, M. (2016) The Cognitive Spectrum of Transformative Learning, *Journal of Transformative Learning*, 14(2), 139-162.
- Freire, P. (1970) Cultural Action and Conscientization, *Harvard Educational Review*, September 1970, 40(3), 452-477.
- Garfinkel, H. (2002) *Ethnomethodology's Program*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Hoey, M. (1986) Overlapping Patterns of discourse organisation and their implications for clause
- relational analysis of problem-solution texts. In C. Cooper. and S. Greenbaum (Eds.) *Studying*
- *writing: Linguistic approaches*. London: Sage. pp.187-214.
- Kegan, R. (1995) *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA, US: Harvard University Press.
- Lather, P. (1991) *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.
- Ligorio, M.B., Loperfido, F.F., Sansone, N., Spadaro, P.F. (2011) Blending educational models to design blended activities. In F. Pozzi & D. Persico (Eds) *Techniques for fostering collaboration in online learning communities: Theoretical and practical perspectives*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 64-81.
- Mayordomo, R.M. & Onrubia, J. (2015) Work coordination and collaborative knowledge construction in a small group collaborative virtual task, *Internet and Higher Education*, 25(1), 96-104.
- Meyers, C., & Jones, T. B. (1993) *Promoting Active Learning: Strategies for the College Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1996) Contemporary Paradigms of Learning, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 46, 158–172.

- Mezirow, J. (2003) Transformative learning as discourse, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1): 58-63.
- Patil, A., and Codner, G. (2007) Accreditation of engineering education: review, observations and proposal for global accreditation. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 32(6), 639-651.
- Psathas, G. (1995). "Talk and Social Structure", and, "Studies of Work", *Human Studies* 18, 139–155.
- Schaeffer, D., Panchal, J.H., Thames, J.L., Haroon, S., Mistree, F. (2012) Educating engineers for the near tomorrow, *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 28(2), 381-396.
- Silberman, M.L. (1996) *Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject*. Prentice Hall, USA
- Taylor, E. (2008) New directions for adult and continuing education, no. 119, *Wiley Periodicals*.
- Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Paper 10:

Four years of Glasgow-Gaza pre-sessional English telecollaboration: reflections from an ethical perspective

The Siege of Gaza, and the isolation, war-damage and shortages that it has engendered, have brought about many compensatory strengths within Gazan society in general, and its higher education sector in particular. The collaboration outlined in this chapter has been built on two very specifically Siege-related attributes found among students and staff at a Gazan university: expertise in online platforms that can help overcome the isolation, and a keen interest in exploring potential engineering responses to the destruction and the shortages that have resulted. Each of these have in turn been built on the Palestine-specific characteristic of ‘*sumud*’, which can be translated as “[...] personal and collective resilience and steadfastness’ (Marie *et al.* 2018: 20); working on our pre-sessional English language course in far-away Scotland, we have had many opportunities to appreciate (and to benefit from) this unwillingness to bow down in the face of immense challenges. This paper outlines the stages of a successful online collaboration between students on Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) master’s courses at the Islamic University of Gaza, and pre-sessional international students hoping to embark on SET-related Master’s courses at the University of Glasgow. It also looks at one, less successful, attempt to broaden this endeavour to embrace Biomed students at each institution, and draws some conclusions from this relative failure. The chapter offers an overview of the four years of the collaboration to date, looking at how the overall project was structured and funded, the organisational, financial and technological challenges that were overcome, the lessons that have been learned, and the benefits to both institutions that have resulted, while also attempting to reflect on the political economy of the collaborative work, and its relationship to ideologies of global mobility and immobilization.

The initial rationale for setting up an online international link-up

The UK is the second-most popular destination in the world for overseas study, with 429,000 international students in 2016 (OECD, 2016). The University of Glasgow, like all UK universities, has seen a growth in the number of overseas students; in the academic year 2016/17 (the most recent year for which statistics are available at the time of writing), slightly over 5,000 of the 28,600 students at the University were from outside the UK / European Union. But a better idea of the significance of this group can be gained from the

fees they are charged. Many of the students reported on in this chapter were studying for an MSc in Electronics and Electrical Engineering; taking this as an example, while home and European Union students will pay £8,000 per year, those from overseas will be paying over £21,000 to access the very same course (University of Glasgow website, 2018). Overseas students clearly have an economic significance for the institutions that host them that goes well beyond their numbers, but they often lack the language needed for entry to their chosen postgraduate courses. Many students opt to take a secure English language test (such as IELTS) while others instead choose to attend a pre-sessional summer course at their university, a bridge to matriculation that provides (beyond the key language skills) the added value of acculturation, taking ‘culture’ both in the most generally-accepted sense, but also to signify learning about the workings of a UK university, i.e. the ‘culture of academia’.

In the larger universities, there is often a subject-specific element to the tuition that is provided. However, these summer pre-sessional courses are held at a time when faculty tend to take holiday, and are delivered by English language teachers who are recruited just for the summer months and who, as a rule, lack subject-specific knowledge. The dearth of meaningful engagement with content that results can in part be overcome via published courses (and a really extensive range of subject-specific textbooks has emerged), but there remain many UK university courses that target niche areas of SET, or interdisciplinary degrees (crossovers, for instance, between Engineering and Management Studies, or Engineering and Accountancy) that have yet to benefit from a course-book. An even more fundamental problem with the provision of appropriate content, however, is the fact that these are by definition disciplines that evolve very quickly indeed, and published materials can be considered dated within a few short years or, as in the case of Electronics and Electrical Engineering, or Information and Communications Technology, much faster.

Teaching materials must also be paid for, and this can be quite expensive for institutions. One response to this is to produce materials in-house, but the production of a well-researched and attractively-presented in-house course will also incur significant costs for a university; even a 5-week course will necessitate many weeks of staff-time, using the experience of more established staff-members, who tend to be at the higher end of the pay-scales. Moreover, as with the course-books, every year these materials will need to be revisited and, if necessary, updated or replaced.

At the University of Glasgow's English for Academic Study (EAS) unit, we felt that these top-down solutions were unwieldy, resistant to change, and costly. At the same time, as trained teachers of English, we had our own opinions on how effective learning could best be fostered, and how the University's graduate attributes definition of the effective communicator – i.e. one “able to articulate complex ideas with respect to the needs and abilities of diverse audiences” and “to communicate clearly and confidently, and listen and negotiate effectively with others” (University of Glasgow Graduate Attributes Matrix) – could best be met. We were aiming to create a much more authentic course than could be provided by a textbook or through in-house materials, one whose emphasis “should primarily be on meaning and communication and which replicates communication in the real world” (Guariento & Morley, 2001: 350).

In particular, we knew the classroom value of the ‘information gap’, a central tenet of the communicative language teaching methodology that has driven developments in English language instruction over the past three decades. An information gap occurs when your interlocutor possesses information that you require in order to complete a task, which in turn leads to an authentic reason for speaking (or writing) in order to overcome the gap. We wondered whether a cross-border response building on students' personal content-interests could be fashioned, and whether a methodology channelling the motivational power of the information gap might be achievable cross-border. To enable this, we needed access to an overseas partner.

Genesis and basic design of the project

There is a history of fruitful collaboration between the University of Glasgow's School of Education and the Islamic University of Gaza, dating back to 2007, and, in 2015 staff from English for Academic Studies within the School of Modern Languages and Cultures in Glasgow (from now on, for the sake of simplicity, just ‘Glasgow’) approached the Vice-Dean for Internationalisation at the Islamic University of Gaza (from now on, ‘Gaza’) with a view to engaging their students as partners on the project-work element of the culminating five weeks' of Glasgow's pre-sessional SET course.

We started with a simple premise. Gazan students would provide Glasgow-based pre-sessional students with a range of engineering-related challenges facing those living in the

Gaza Strip. The Glasgow-based students, in groups of two or three, would choose a project title from this list, one which they considered relevant to their coming studies, and gather information, working towards a 1,500-word written project and a presentation, each for submission in the final week. The written project would be researched jointly by the Glasgow-based students, then written up individually, and each of these two- or three-person groups would be partnered online by two students from Gaza. The Gazan students, having provided the initial Gaza-specific engineering problem to be analysed, would subsequently provide content feedback on their Glasgow-based partners' responses, analysing in particular whether these were feasible given the geography and the massive resource constraints under which Gazan engineers must operate.

Partners? Running a project with an inherent power-imbalance

An important element of the role played by the Gaza students was the need to provide content-feedback alone, without any suggestion of help in actually writing the written project, and this raised an important ethical issue from the outset. Lorente (2010), writing about the Philippines, outlines government policy aimed at preparing prospective migrants for the remittance-gathering overseas employment which is so key to overall Philippines GDP and (controversially) choosing to categorise the language needs of each according to their professions/skills. Was it acceptable to similarly limit the role and expectations of the Gazan participants? Were we fashioning, via these limitations, something akin to what Lorente terms 'scripts of servitude'? Many of the Gazan participants in fact found the confines of their assigned role to be frustrating, as we can see from end-of-course student-comments (unabridged) such as:

'Ensure the sustainability of collaboration by request an extra joint-research or press article'
(Gaza student)

'May be if we swap the role so Gaza students give the presentation and Glasgow ask questions and giving feedback' (Gaza student)

However, the 'gatekeeping' (Roberts, 2010) function of the pre-sessional English course needs to be borne constantly in mind as a factor which has conditioned the evolving collaborations in the past four years. The Glasgow-based students come from a range of

countries; as many as 60% speak Mandarin as their mother-tongue, while maybe 15% are Arabic-speakers from Saudi Arabia. These students choose the pre-sessional course as an alternative entrance route to a secure English language test. However, they still need to pass the examinations in Listening and Reading at the end of the course, and to obtain a pass-grade for their 1,500-word essay (linked to project-work) and similarly a pass-grade for their end-of-course oral presentation (likewise linked to project-work), in order to access their Master's programmes. Thus, although the project forms only about 25% of the total time-commitment of the final 5-week course, it is a key contributor to the end-of-course assessment of the Glasgow-based students' linguistic readiness for university study.

Regarding the Glasgow-based students, as organisers, we felt that incentives were not lacking. The proposed link-up to engineering students in Gaza would provide:

- Meaningful practice in all four skills, including Speaking and Listening (which are harder to practice outside class)
- access to authentic engineering and I.T. challenges;
- opportunities for developing the skills inherent in teamwork;
- the chance to gain subject-knowledge;
- the opportunity to build inter-cultural awareness.

However, while we liked to think that the Glasgow-based students would buy into the project (and, as we shall see, feedback was favourable) for these *intrinsic* benefits, at root they had no choice; either they performed, or access to their master's courses would be denied. In other words, the gatekeeping nature of the pre-sessional course meant that involvement in the project was obligatory for the Glasgow-based students. The gatekeeping aspect of the course for these participants (and the total and unfair absence of any such incentive for the Gazans) was an immutable feature of whatever collaboration we would be able to produce.

We thus had a reasonable idea of what would incentivise the Glasgow-based students, and we imagined that, to a degree, the Gazan students would also be incentivised by the same opportunities that the online collaboration would afford. Firstly, though we asked administrators in Gaza to find students with an overall IELTS-equivalent of 6.0, but ideally with a equivalent of 6.5 in Speaking (crucial for meaningful synchronous oral

communication), there would still be opportunities for enhancement of language skills. Beyond this core issue, we also hoped that the Gazan students would, like those in Glasgow, benefit from the chances to develop team-working experience, to gain subject-specific knowledge, and to work with people from other cultures. An end-of-course certificate of participation would also be provided, and these perceived benefits were explained via initial contacts with the prospective Gazan participants.

We also hoped that the intrinsic value of education in Palestine would be a significant driving force, an impression based on the organisers' previous knowledge of the Palestinian context and experience gained from previous inter-institutional collaboration, but in addition we went into the project aware of other factors, which might be termed structural imbalances, likely to incentivise Gazan involvement. For example, might institutions (and the students within them) agree to participate in order to break out of the psychological isolation resulting from longstanding and ongoing blockade, i.e. might a force motivating Gazan participants (both administrators and students) be the knowledge that they have few alternative modes of interaction with the world beyond the Strip? Was this a fair premise on which to base a partnership, and (given the very significant power imbalance) could it be termed, in any true sense of the word, a collaboration? If this was one concern, we also worried further that participation in the project might result from a hope that any involvement in an international collaboration could potentially increase the likelihood of actual travel beyond the Gaza Strip (something over which we had absolutely no control). These fears regarding manifestations of symbolic power in such a crude manner were present from the very start of the project, have never left, and will be returned to in the conclusion.

Response to power imbalance

To re-iterate, in simple terms, we started our project with an understanding of a really significant power imbalance, namely the key arbiter of Glasgow-based students' commitment was the fact that successful completion of the 5-week pre-session course would open the road to their future master's studies, an objective that was unavailable for the Gazan participants.

In partial response to this structural imbalance, we decided to offer a two-week course in the provision of constructive feedback, to be delivered to the Gazan students before they teamed

up online with their Glasgow-based partners. This course (available via creative commons: <https://goo.gl/ifxdh7>) takes a three-stage exploration-integration-application approach (Garrison and Arbaugh, 2007) to the issue of providing constructive feedback, with each stage being progressively more complex, challenging and open-ended. It was designed to develop the Gazan students' ability to guide the Glasgow-based students towards content-knowledge in a manner combining efficiency with diplomacy, and to ensure that they understood the need to avoid providing language assistance (see Guariento et al., 2018, for a detailed description) in order to maintain the 'gatekeeping' nature of the Glasgow pre-sessional.

The constructive feedback course was designed to ensure that the project was as effective as possible, in terms of delivering useful feedback to the Glasgow students, but it also provided workplace skills that we hoped would be valuable beyond the immediate confines of the telecollaboration, of potential value in finding future online employment. The World Bank (2018) itself labels an unemployment rate of 60% among 15- to 29-year-olds in Gaza as 'staggering', and as a result the Ministry of Education has been pro-active in searching for ways to improve the digital literacies of Gazan students (and thereby their chances of accessing remote work).

In terms of resourcing, writing the pre-project Constructive Feedback course involved extra work for the Glasgow-based staff but, after an initial plenary session, much of the actual course was delivered asynchronously, in a way that required regular monitoring and some group and individual feedback, but avoided serious rescheduling of other commitments. From the Palestinian perspective, pre-course, the Islamic University of Gaza allocated a staff member to take on the tasks of publicising the collaboration, and of selecting students; in view of anticipated audio-quality issues, a minimum Listening/Speaking ability of IELTS-equivalent 6.0 was stipulated (selection to be undertaken by IUG). The Writing/Reading stipulation was less rigorous, as it was felt that the asynchronous nature of reading/writing interactions would allow for querying and clarification in the case of ambiguity (as did, in fact, transpire). The final task of the administrator in Gaza was in following up locally on any online participation issues flagged up by her colleague in Glasgow.

EAST 1:

The first iteration of the Project (EAST 1) ran for 5 weeks, from the end of July to the end of August 2015. In a plenary session on the very first day of the pre-session course in late July, students newly-arrived to Glasgow (from China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, etc.) learned about the project, were asked to choose a topic that interested them from the list sent from Gaza, and to find two partners interested in the same topic. The majority bought into the authenticity of the 5-week project from the outset, and understood the need to maximise the time available on a short course. Not all could find topics directly related to their coming studies, though almost all acknowledged that this willingness to accept an external brief foreshadowed likely post-university work-scenarios.

Interestingly, a significant number of the non-Arab students had never heard of the Gaza Strip, so there was also a need to provide background information regarding the geography and politics of the area. The short explanation, on day 1, proved insufficient, and later iterations of the project brought various responses to overcome this lack of information (see EAST 4, below).

The Glasgow-Gaza groups were set up on this first day, and ensuring timely initial contacts was the next administrative task; this needed to happen within 36 hours, and had to involve a face-to-face element in order to create a Glasgow-Gaza ‘bond’. The organisation of this link-up was left to the students, but by EAST 4 we had decided that this stage was so key that it needed to be done in-class, to ensure that the ice was broken and true ownership created. Another crucial administrative task during these first two days was the need to set up Facebook groups for each Gaza-Glasgow pairing, which a Glasgow-based staff member was able to undertake on a teaching load reduced by 40% over the final 5 weeks of the pre-session course (regular subsequent monitoring was also necessary, to ensure online interactions were ongoing).

In terms of progress with the content of the projects, monitoring in weeks 2, 3 and 4 fell largely to the five class teachers, who had been inducted over a two-day period prior to week one. On the final Monday of the 5-week course, the Glasgow-based students handed in their individual 1,500-word projects, and the Glasgow-Gaza groups jointly delivered their closing presentations. Each participant, whether in Glasgow or Gaza, was able to speak for 5

minutes, after which questions were taken from a live audience in both institutions. Internet connectivity varied over the two days of the presentations, but was much improved by the end, as organisers learned how to maximise quality by avoiding audio feedback. An unexpected issue was that of audio interference from the (obviously crucial) air-conditioning in Gaza; this made it difficult for the Gaza audience to follow the presentations, and the only remedy was to turn off the air-conditioning for as long as was bearable (this brought home to the organisers an unexpected drawback of needing to hold the course in the very hottest month of the year – the problem of air-conditioning background noise was even present in Glasgow, in a country not noted for high temperatures). Gazan students were asked to upload video-versions of their talks beforehand, to overcome any interruptions to the live link resulting from electricity cuts, but in the main these back-ups were not needed, and Gazan students were able to present ‘live’, and to participate actively in the subsequent Q & A sessions.

At Glasgow, the cost implications of adding this international link to the pre-session course were fairly small, beyond allocating a reduced teaching load to one staff member, as some form of project would have run anyway, regardless of any involvement with an overseas partner. This was not the case in Gaza. During the course itself, although the Skype / Facebook / WhatsApp interactions could in theory take place from home, the reality of life in Gaza (sometimes with as little as four hours’ electricity per day) meant that funding was needed to open the university facilities during their holiday period, in order to take advantage of the institution’s back-up generator. A small sum, remaining from a previous project in Glasgow, was made available to Gaza to offset some of these costs, and for the administrative load mentioned above. 37 Glasgow-based students, in groups of three, linked up with 20 Gazan students, in pairs. Participants at both institutions were monitored pre- and post-Project on their perceived levels of confidence according: ability to communicate orally in English; problem-solving; team-work; intercultural awareness; content-knowledge; digital literacies (see Guariento et al. 2016 for a detailed description of this data).

EAST 2:

Student-reaction, post-EAST 1, was positive at both institutions across this range of criteria, and the decision was taken to expand provision in 2016 into a second strand of the Glasgow pre-session course. A Biomed cohort was chosen, providing roughly similar numbers of

students at Glasgow as the successful IT/SET cohort of 2015, and an area in which Gaza is again strong. As we have seen, feedback from Gaza demonstrated a desire for an expanded role for their students, i.e. a change from mentor to co-researcher, and EAST 2 followed this more horizontal relationship for the Biomed cohort (while the IT/SET cohort continued with the EAST 1 organisational principle, i.e. with Gazan students as ‘content-providers’). The Biomed students at Glasgow still needed to write their final 1,500-word essay on their own, for the ‘gatekeeping’ stricture already mentioned, but the Gazan Biomed students were also given content-specific (i.e. Biomed) feedback on an end-of-course 750-word summary and oral presentation. This content feedback was provided by PhD students working within Glasgow’s School of Medicine and, as this involved working outwith Glasgow’s School of Modern Languages and Culture, there were cost-implications. For Gaza, running EAST 2 was costed at a higher (and more realistic) figure than the EAST 1 pilot, even taking into consideration the expanded student-numbers involved (a Gaza/Glasgow ratio of 21:31 for the SET cohort, and of 20:24. for the Biomed, i.e. a doubling overall). This money was sourced via a successful application to the British Council’s ELTRA Programme, which provided £7,500 to cover costs in Gaza, and £700 to cover the costs of paying the Glasgow PhD Biomedical students. Participants at both institutions were again monitored pre- and post-Project on their confidence levels according to the criteria adopted for EAST 1 (for a detailed description of the EAST 2 data, see Rolinska et al., 2017).

This student-feedback evaluated the SET course more highly than the Biomed. The decision by EAST course-organisers to ask the cross-institution Biomed researchers to investigate generic health-issues (rather than the Gaza-specific issues facing their IT/SET counterparts) was, in retrospect, probably the main contributory factor here. The rationale was that Gaza-specific health issues might be of too-limited applicability beyond the Gaza Strip, but the result was two Biomed groups, nominally paired, but actually working in parallel on generic health issues, i.e. without the ‘information-gap’ concerning Gaza which had generated high levels of communication during EAST 1.

The following comment exemplifies the resulting challenges, related to the broad nature of the brief:

‘When we have different ideals about the topic we will take a long time to make a decision’ (Glasgow student).

There was also the problem that the Biomed students in Gaza had more pressing outside commitments during the course, such as family commitment (the Gaza Biomed students were, on the whole, slightly older) or the need to carry out paid work (unemployment among health practitioners in Gaza is, relatively speaking, lower). As a consequence, Gaza Biomed students were less able to link up to their partners in Glasgow with regularity. For EAST 3, the decision was therefore made to revert to an IT/SET-specific cohort.

EAST 3:

EAST 3 ran in 5 weeks astride July and August 2017. There were 81 Glasgow-based IT/SET students, an unexpected increase¹⁰. This growth in numbers resulted in some instances of 4:1 Glasgow:Gaza pairings. In terms of maximising Gazan ‘reach’ overseas, this was a positive development but, organisationally, a 4:1 partnership is rather vulnerable; if a Gazan student had dropped out for any reason, it would have left the students in Glasgow without their *in situ* ‘expert’. This did in fact happen in two cases (the students in Glasgow were able to continue with their project, though the project became perforce more generic in nature, and course-organisers had to factor in their lack of access to local feedback at the assessment stage). Care was taken to ensure that Arabic speakers within the Glasgow cohort were spread across the groupings. An unforeseen increase in student numbers across the entire pre-session course in summer 2017 also meant staffing shortfalls, and course administrators in Glasgow had to step in as teachers. Although the course received positive generic feedback on the final day, we were unable to administer the pre- / post-course data-comparisons of EAST Projects 1 and 2, and in the end-of-course presentations, participants were only able to speak for three minutes each (when combined with ongoing observation over the 5 weeks of the pre-session course, still ample for the purposes of evaluation).

In terms of cost, EAST 3 was run by Gaza with no external financial input. By this time (March 2017), Glasgow had made a successful bid to the European Union’s Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (ICM) programme, securing a grant of €240,000 to bring 12 students from Gaza to Glasgow for 6- or 12-month study-abroad visits. Using this funding, students from Gaza are able to gain credits towards their home degrees while taking courses in Glasgow. With another bid for €355,000 ongoing while EAST 3 was being organised,

¹⁰ A real challenge on pre-session courses is the real unpredictability of student-arrivals – if organisers could know who was coming to Glasgow beforehand, a great deal of useful preparatory work could be done in a way that parallels the preparation with the Gazan students, but this is unfortunately not the case

organisers in Gaza were able to make the case to their own finance office for a continued involvement in the EAST Project even without the external funding that had been sourced for EAST Projects 1 and 2. Though participation in EAST did not provide a direct route into ICM funding for Gazan students, the inclusion of EAST within the ICM bid had certainly strengthened it, and this would presumably remain the case for future bids.

EAST 4

The latest iteration of EAST ran in July and August 2018, and was once again restricted to SET/IT students. To overcome the fact that many students know little or nothing of Gaza on arrival, students were shown a Guardian video-clip outlining the breadth of engineering-related issues facing residents of the Strip, and asked to reflect on potential social and health effects. As organisers, our experience on EAST projects 1 through 3 has shown that fruitful collaboration has depended on the forging of solid Glasgow-Gaza ‘bonds’ early on, and (despite a busy timetable) a week 1 slot was released to ensure that Skype/WhatsApp contact took place within class-time, i.e. a compulsory ice-breaker.

The significant 2017 growth in Glasgow student numbers continued into summer 2018, with over 160 students participating (cf. 37 in summer 2015). Interest in participation from Gaza also grew, with expressions of interest from 80 students (90% of whom met the overall IELTS-equivalent stipulation); this level of demand can probably be linked to the two successful International Credit Mobility bids mentioned above and the desire among Gazan students for an opportunity to study at the University of Glasgow. It ought to be re-stated here that access to ICM opportunities is not dependent upon Gazans’ participation on the EAST Project. These mobility packages are open to *all* students at the Islamic University of Gaza who can find credit-bearing courses in Glasgow related to their own courses; of the first group of eight Gaza scholars who successfully reached Glasgow on the ICM-financed programme in January 2018, only three had participated in a previous EAST Project.

Organisers in Glasgow are keen to find out whether the success of the Glasgow/Gaza relationship can be replicated with another overseas partner. Any future collaborating institutions must be able to furnish (like the Islamic University of Gaza) committed staff and students, availability in August, solid connectivity, and a workable time-zone difference (to enable synchronous sessions). For EAST 4, a second link-up was piloted with a university in

Chile (INACAP), limited to just 16 Information Technology students, and paralleling the ongoing participation from Gaza. As coordinating online contact between Glasgow, Chile and Palestine requires extensive logistical organization, no Chile-Palestine contact was attempted, though the longer-term aim is for a ‘triangle’ of this nature, one that could put Gaza in a key position as an experienced administrator, and which would be a significant further step in breaking Gaza’s academic isolation. Chile, a country with a sizeable Palestinian community and one placed workably in terms of time-zones, would be well-placed for a longer-term expansion of this nature.

Alongside the exploration of links with other international partners, organisers in Glasgow are also keen to see whether the EAST model can be replicated with other disciplines within the Islamic University of Gaza or perhaps other universities in Gaza, and held a post-EAST 4 webinar (in February 2019) in order to explore this objective. This invitation was sent out via the British Association for Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes listings, and expressions of interest have been received from the following universities: Manchester Metropolitan, Leeds, Canterbury Christchurch, Southampton, and Coventry. It is also hoped to visit Gaza to help move forward any possible collaborations that may result. This visit can take advantage of funding already forming part of the two Erasmus+ bids, though the reluctance of the University of Glasgow to provide insurance for a trip to an area of the world on the Foreign Office ‘no-visit’ list must still be overcome.

Finally, the organisers are keen to explore the role of motivation. Previous iterations of EAST have prioritised language ability as the principle criterion for selection of students from Gaza, but positive experience from EAST 4 suggests Gazan students who are particularly eager to participate may in fact prove equally valuable interlocutors. Eagerness is a less easily quantifiable criterion for selection, but on all projects to date we have seen some evidence of relatively weak linguists who have contributed to work of high quality, hence our interest in this area. What features of “eagerness” made these weak linguists so effective as partners? How are they translanguaging? What resources do they bring to the interaction that are not merely about narrowly conceived linguistic proficiency in English?

Having given an overview of the four projects held to date, and our hopes for the future, the article will now move on to summarise the main successes that have resulted, and the

challenges that remain. We are aware that unsaid but present (and growing) political economy and power-imbalance concerns underlie each of these successes.

Successes

An analysis of the data available from EAST Projects 1 and 2, showed clearly students' positive assessment regarding value of the course in terms of enhanced communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, digital literacies, and inter-cultural awareness. This held true, though less markedly, for the EAST 2 Biomed cohort. Comments were positive from both Glasgow and Gaza but, in all cases, feedback from Gaza was the most positive.

Focusing first on the language benefits of the project, the following comments from participants are illustrative:

'Our group was formed by 3 students of different nationalities. So we needed to speak just in English and be as clear as possible' (Glasgow student).

I think the way it improve my communication skills like when i say that i moved from the intermediate level to advanced level' (Gaza student).

'For example, we said hello at the beginning and use suitable words like "could you please". Also, considering about the special situation of them, we avoid asking questions which have some relationship with the sensitive aspects' (Glasgow student).

'I have overcome my fear of communicating with english speakers and enjoy it' (Glasgow).

'I think I have courage now to try speaking English without spend a lot of time to order the words in my mind or be afraid of grammars faults' (Gaza student).

'It was my first experience to talk with others in the English language therefore as an incentive for me in order to work on improving my experience in communication, since the only communicative for me was between family and friends...there these give me more daring and self-confidence' (Gaza student).

The comments suggest various positive outcomes from the online project work, from a fairly direct appraisal of a perceived improvement in language-proficiency, to more nuanced developments, such as the pedagogical value of mixed-nationality groupings that the project engendered. The need to pay attention to quite complex politeness strategies stemming from the ‘need to compromise’ and the ‘sensitive aspects’ of life in Gaza suggests that the project’s value touched on pragmatic and intercultural issues that, we hope, both stretched and stimulated participants. Interestingly, the final three comments all talk of a really meaningful chance to overcome affective issues (‘fear’, ‘courage’, ‘daring’); it seems that these were issues faced by both student-groups.

To focus on a benefit specific to Glasgow, a gratifying gain has been students’ understanding of the value of the process set in motion by the way in which the EAST was conceptualised. This is particularly important since most pre-sessional students come from educational trajectories that prioritise product (for instance, essays and certificates) over process. Despite the gatekeeping function of the 5-week pre-sessional course, the nature of the Project brought home to many an understanding of how knowledge and experience can be gained incrementally:

‘Actually, I think the topic doesn’t have much relation to my subjects, but I found an article using the latest technology-data mining to solve it. I learn a lot and i know once are you thinking, anything has a relation to each other (Glasgow student)’.

Similarly, teachers in Glasgow have considered involvement on the course very favourably:

‘I can’t think of a course I enjoyed teaching more. The link to Gaza is of real value to staff and students and gives a sense of working on a real, applied project rather than an abstract project, which is important in SET’ (post-course teacher-feedback, August 2017).

The final success, less tangible but probably the greatest overall, has been the bringing together of students who previously knew little of the other’s culture. The Glasgow-based students particularly appreciated the opportunity to learn in depth about a new country, and to do this indirectly, by working together to try to overcome real-world challenges its people

were facing. Discovering the value of this inductive method of learning about another culture (see Bikowski, 2011) has been one of the key successes of the projects to date. For the students in Glasgow, many from relatively privileged backgrounds, it was often a first contact with people living in much more challenging circumstances than their own:

'I just knew that there were wars in Gaza, but I didn't know to what extent they influence in daily life of the people there' (Glasgow student).

For the Gazan students, many noted their happiness at being able to break their feelings of isolation, even if only in virtual terms, and to tell others about life in Gaza:

'Listening to other people from other nationalities thinking with our problems and solve it is very supportive. Of course, we communicate with other students from different nationalities. I also participate in raising cultural awareness about my country and its problems' (Gaza student).

For both groups, a great value of the projects has been in enhancing human contact:

- *'when I dealt with others with each one has its own culture, my view of the subject really changed...i actually get to know some cultures and really impressed by some'* (Gaza student).
- *'In this project, we learn to distribute the jobs, and share the ideas. And sometime even learn to compromise'* (Glasgow student).

However, there remain many challenges to overcome, which are discussed below.

Challenges

To start with the core linguistic issue, there were also a couple of less positive comments from students which must be highlighted:

'The project was very useful although if the project was with other universities inside the UK might be more useful rather than Arabic country, because they can correct some mistake in term of speaking' (Glasgow student).

'Maybe contacting native speakers would be more effective on our communication skills' (Gaza student).

The linguistic nativism inherent in these comments is very interesting, and we attempted to address the issue during EAST 4 by making explicit reference on day 1 to the fact that the majority of encounters in English now involve English as a lingua franca contacts, i.e. between non-native speakers outwith Kachru's Inner Circle. More challenging, there seems to be a disconnect regarding just what makes up an effective communicative act; to paraphrase Canagarajah (2018: 272), our Glasgow and Gazan students may be overestimating text as their 'unit of analysis' and, thereby in turn overestimating the value of the native speaker as the carrier of this text. Canagarajah's avowal of text plus *context* (he cites the centrality not only of setting, but also of social networks) seems particularly apposite to the EAST project; within an already crowded course, we need to find materials that move beyond the global-employability aspects of English language proficiency to look at examples of successful (and less successful) engineering interactions in cross-cultural settings. Analysis of such interactions will generate valuable language-practice opportunities, but (more fundamentally) may serve to convince our students to value an L2 speaker as interlocutor and, by so doing, to value *their own* potential as communicators.

The difficulty of communication with Gaza does have to be acknowledged, too. The IT links at the Islamic University of Gaza have been prioritised (despite resource shortfalls), as they must be in a country almost 100% dependent upon the Internet for its links with the wider world, but electricity cuts do have an unavoidable impact on student-to-student interactions. These can be overcome, particularly as the majority of contacts are asynchronous, but it is crucial that the Glasgow-based students are, from the outset, aware of the difficulties under which their Gazan partners are operating, and the additional of the Guardian video in week 1 (which outlines the pernicious effects of the blockade on Gaza) during EAST 4 was an attempt to ensure this awareness.

Organisationally, the experience with the Biomed cohort during EAST 2 was instructive, and suggests that any future expansion into other disciplines (maybe back into Biomedicine) needs to replicate the Gaza-specific ‘information-gap’ that has, we believe, been such a central contributor to the success of the IT/SET collaborations to date. It would be wonderful to experiment with other disciplines from other Glasgow pre-sessionals strands, but Gaza to Glasgow links for, say, Management or for Accounting, would be more challenging both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective, and would require staff and resources in Glasgow that are unavailable.

Beyond language, IT links, and the logistics of project organisation, there is of course the issue of finance. If funding can be sourced, it is of course a boon, but we have succeeded in embedding the EAST project-work within the Glasgow pre-sessionals course without any significant cost implications (beyond the 40% reduced teaching-load for one staff member). The cost implications in Gaza are higher, as the Islamic University of Gaza has needed to open its facilities during their summer holidays, but IUG has been willing to do this in view of the increased international links (including funded links) which have resulted. Applying for such funding requires patience, and probably requires a Gazan partner able and willing to run a pilot on a self-funded basis (unless the UK institution can provide this financing). It also calls for considerable time spent post-project, in the autumn, to put together a funding-application for the following year. Such applications need to show evidence of solid UK-Gaza co-ordination, but we have happily found plenty of goodwill at British Council and European Union levels for Gaza-based initiatives.

At the University of Glasgow, similar levels of goodwill have been demonstrated by support bodies, but a wider institutional commitment, beyond the English for Academic Study Unit (which has provided the space for experimentation with these projects) has been somewhat disappointing. In part, this may be due to organisational difficulties accompanying working with Gaza that simply don’t exist anywhere else in the world¹¹. In part there may be residual reluctance to move beyond the one-dimensional image of Gaza as depicted by many news-providers. Only once did a University of Glasgow staff member explicitly voice concerns of

¹¹ After a slow start, the commitment of the University’s marketing and recruitment arm has been exemplary. However, after months of work gone into preparing solid and fully-funded exchanges, many recipients (both staff *and* students) were refused travel; some by Israel, some by Egypt, some by internal Rafah/Hamas-related issues at the border-crossing, and some by the UK’s own visa-issuing authority.

this nature, questioning whether sending funds to a Gazan-based institution would fall foul of anti-terrorism laws, but one does wonder whether similar concerns are silently shared by others, leading to a reluctance to engage or to take what are perceived to be potentially risky decisions. It is rather dispiriting to note that such reluctance never really needs to rise to the level of open questioning in order to be very effective in dissuading partnerships. Finally, there may in part be an organisational preference towards targeting more obvious sources of international student recruitment, countries and regions with greater financial resources and with the infrastructure already in place (agents, recruiting events) to send students to Glasgow.

Conclusion

As we have already noted, the evolution of the collaboration, from online mobility to actual mobility over four years, is in itself a development with major political, moral and economic implications. Is there a hope among participants in Gaza that participation will lead to overseas travel? Are organisers in Glasgow (and in Gaza) comfortable with the fact that student-involvement in a project may be based on such a hope, one moreover dependent on successful funding applications? Even if funding for travel *can* be accessed, are organisers comfortable with having to make gatekeeping decisions regarding, for instance, assessment of language-level that may follow? The issues of symbolic power, whether related to dreams of mobility or actual mobility, require really serious reflection and consideration.

Yet the evolution from online to actual mobility has without doubt been a source of great satisfaction to the organisers in Glasgow and, judging by what our Palestinian colleagues say, in Gaza, too. During EAST 3, Glasgow-based Thai and Chinese students worked with two partners in Gaza to research telecommunication engineering strategies to address the absence of addresses in the Gaza Strip (see Rolinska et al., in this volume, for further details). To witness in January 2018 the same Thai and Chinese students meeting in person one of their former Gazan online partners, now an International Credit Mobility-funded student in Glasgow, was very moving indeed.

There is a fear that working with Gaza may prove emotionally overwhelming for some of our Glasgow-based students but, on day 1 of future projects, alongside the Guardian video outlining the vast scale of challenges facing Gaza, we also plan to show videos from previous

student projects. One of these videos, entitled “EAST Project - Road Traffic Problems in Gaza”, can be found on YouTube. It was shot by an engineering student in Gaza to demonstrate how the parking of cars, the dumping of construction material and the encroachment of shops and cafes renders long stretches of pavement inaccessible to pedestrians, causing serious safety issues in the Strip’s main cities. The video shows the strength in adversity of those living in Gaza, but is an illustration not only of ‘*sumud*’ (the collective resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian nation mentioned in the introduction), but also that, in everyday life, what frustrates Gazans is also what frustrates Brazilians, or Indonesians, or Glaswegians. As the video (and the wider EAST telecollaboration) shows, there is far more that unites than divides us.

References

- Bikowski, D. (2011) Review of ‘Online Intercultural Exchange: An Introduction for Foreign Language Teachers’. *Language Learning and Technology*, 15 (1), 24-28
- Canagarajah, S. (2018) Materialising competence: perspectives from international STEM scholars, *The Modern Language Journal*, 102 (2), 268-291
- Garrison, D.R. and Arbaugh, J.B. (2007) Researching the community of inquiry framework: Review, issues, and future directions. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10/3, 157-172
- the Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/video/2018/apr/05/inside-gaza-how-a-city-under-siege-prepares-for-war-video> accessed 28/11/18
- Guariento, W., Al Masri, N. & Rolinska, A. (2016) Investigating EAST (A Scotland-Gaza English for Academic Study Telecollaboration between SET Students), *Proceedings of American Society for Engineering Education*, New Orleans, paper i.d. 14492
- Guariento, W., & Morley, J. (2001) Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom, *ELT Journal*, Vol. 55, 4 (1), 347–353
- Guariento, W., Rolinska, A., & Al Masri, N. (2018) Constructive content-based feedback in EAP contexts, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37 (3), 514-532
- Kachru, B. (1986) The power and politics of English, *World Englishes* Vol.5, issues 2-3.
- Ladyshevsky, R.K. (2006) Peer coaching: a constructivist methodology for enhancing critical thinking in postgraduate business education, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25 (1)
- Lorente, B. (2010) Language in the making of global workers. Paper given at the conference *Language, Migration and Labour*, University of Freiburg, Switzerland, 28-29 January, 2010

- Marie, M., Hannigan, B. & Jones, A. (2018) Social ecology of resilience and ‘Sumud’ of Palestinians, *Health*, Vol. 22 (1), 20-35
- Roberts, C. (2010) Language, migration and the gatekeepers, *Language Issues*, Vol. 2 (21), 4-18
- Rolinska, A., Guariento, W. & Al Masri, N., (2017) Establishing and sustaining EAP student partnerships across borders, *British Council ELT research paper*
- Topping, K.J. (2009), Peer Assessment, *Theory into Practice*, 48 (1), 20-27
- University of Glasgow Graduate Attributes Matrix:
https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183776_en.pdf, accessed 20/5/19
- World Bank, Palestine’s economic outlook:
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-outlook-april-2018>, accessed 21/11/18

Appendix 1 - Knowledge Exchange Outputs

Knowledge Exchange Output 1:

EAST Project website, July 2015 to 2019,

<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/another-video-from-gaza/#more-362>

Knowledge Exchange Output 2:

University of Glasgow Explorathon, 25/9/15,

<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/2015/09/27/east-project-and-global-glasgow/>

Knowledge Exchange Output 3:

Absolutely Intercultural radio interview, 'The EAST Project', 7/10/16,

<https://www.absolutely-intercultural.com/?m=2016> (50%)

Knowledge Exchange Output 4:

University of Glasgow Newsletter, 'UofG Welcomes Palestinian Students', 13/2/18,

UOFG WELCOMES PALESTINIAN STUDENTS

Issued: Tue, 13 Feb 2018 16:50:00 GMT

The largest single group of Palestinian students to take part in an exchange programme with a UK university have arrived in Glasgow.

The University of Glasgow is profoundly committed to scholarship as an ethical and global endeavour.

The eight students from the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) have begun their studies at the University of Glasgow on this ambitious global language and education programme.

The project between Glasgow and Gaza came about after the School of Modern Languages and Cultures (SMLC) won two grants worth a total of €585,150 from the Erasmus International Credit Mobility scheme.

The scheme supports sending and receiving students and staff to and from partner countries beyond the European Union (EU).

The Palestinians had to overcome last-minute border closures, months of delays, and protracted and very uncomfortable journeys in order to get here.

This ambitious exchange programme has developed from the English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) Project - a collaborative research and writing project between Science and Engineering students in Glasgow and IUG.



At a welcome event the students and staff from both Glasgow and Gaza spoke of their joy that the exchange had finally started.

Manar Elhopy, who is studying a Masters in Applied Linguistics and Translation, speaking on behalf of her fellow IUG students in Glasgow, said: “We would like to thank everyone who has helped make this exchange a reality. We are greatly honoured to be the first students from IUG to come to Glasgow. Over the past eight months, which is longer than the courses we are currently studying in Glasgow, we have been trying to travel from the heart of Gaza to the heart of Scotland – Glasgow. Finally the two hearts have met and we hope will forever be joined.”

Dr Nazmi Al-Masri, an Associate Professor Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Curriculum Development at IUG, speaking via a video link, said: “We are so happy to see our dream a reality and see our students in Glasgow. It is part of a long-term plan to work with Glasgow to build bridges – linguistic, academic, and cultural. We hope our students will enjoy the experience of learning in Glasgow. Our hearts and minds are with them and we wish them the best success in their studies. We know they will come back to Gaza with more knowledge and richer in experience. You have made history by getting to Glasgow and being the first students to do this.”

Perseverance and courage

Professor James C Conroy PhD FAcSS, Vice Principal Internationalisation, said: “The University of Glasgow is profoundly committed to scholarship as an ethical and global endeavour. This commitment is seen in GRAMNet, GCID and other structured

opportunities to bring together colleagues from across the University in shared endeavour. It is in this spirit that we have been delighted to welcome eight students from the Islamic University of Gaza. We hope that this visit with all its challenges will herald further and deeper collaboration between our University and colleagues working in challenging environments in Gaza and elsewhere.

“I am particularly pleased that the funds to support this visit came from the European Union’s Erasmus+ ICM (International Credit Mobility) fund, which has seen the University of Glasgow take the #1 spot in the UK in 2017/18. Much credit is to be afforded to those who led these bids from across all four Colleges and Central Services, most especially in this case Dr. Luis Gomes from SMLC and Celine Reynaud in the mobility team who co-ordinates ICMS across the institution.”

Partnership

The University of Glasgow project team was led by Anna Rolinska and Bill Guariento, from the English for Academic Study Unit at SMLC. For three summers they have worked with IUG on the EAST Project, exploiting a range of digital platforms to build a [winning language/skills-development partnership](#). Anna said: “I would like to thank everybody involved in Glasgow and Gaza for their perseverance, and for their courage to dream big and act on that.”

Bill added: “Six months ago, students from Thailand, China and Palestine were working together online. Now here they are, together in this room. It’s wonderful!”

Dr Luis Gomes, formerly College of Arts Mobility Officer, said: “As we say to all our students coming to study at the University of Glasgow and we now say to our Palestinian students – World Changers Welcome. It is great to see you here.”

The exchange project was supported by staff across the University including our Erasmus Office and Accommodation Services. Professor Alison Phipps, School of Education and UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts, who has worked on a number of University projects with IUG and Dr Al-Masri, said: “The University of Glasgow has the largest numbers of funded projects and partnerships in the world with the Islamic University of Gaza. We have been able to pioneer digital education links, and we are delighted to welcome such a large group of Palestinian students to our city and university.”

It was also supported by both the Foreign Office and the British Council. John Knagg, Global Head, English for Education Systems, at the British Council, speaking at the welcome event, said: “This is a very innovative and collaborative project. It talks to what the British Council is all about - international knowledge and understanding. The original EAST project saw amazing results, including improved language skills, academic knowledge, team working, and intercultural awareness. We are delighted to see these students now in Glasgow, learning and making new friends.”

Knowledge Exchange Output 5:

University of Glasgow, MyGlasgow newsletter, 15/10/18

GAZA-GLASGOW COLLABORATIONS

Issued: Mon, 15 Oct 2018 16:07:00 BST

Sandra White, Glasgow Kelvin MSP, took time out from the SNP conference on Tuesday, 9 October to welcome 20 students from the Islamic University of Gaza, here on the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility programme. This is the biggest-ever Gaza-UK student mobility by far and she wanted to meet them in person.



Many of the students have already worked with the two universities' innovative EAST Project, twinning overseas student-engineers in Glasgow with engineers in Gaza over five weeks each summer. Ms White was also able to meet and congratulate UofG's most recent EAST Project "graduates" back in Gaza, via a teleconferenced link, and learn about some of the Gazan engineering challenges that they've been investigating with UofG students.

The welcome event – "Celebrating links with the Islamic University of Gaza" - coincided with the launch of the School of Education's Online Arabic from Palestine course for beginners. Designed in collaboration with a team at the Arabic Center (Islamic University of Gaza), the course combines video and Skype-taught lessons,

allowing trained teachers in Gaza to access paid work, helping to overcome the employment effects caused by the ongoing blockade of Gaza.

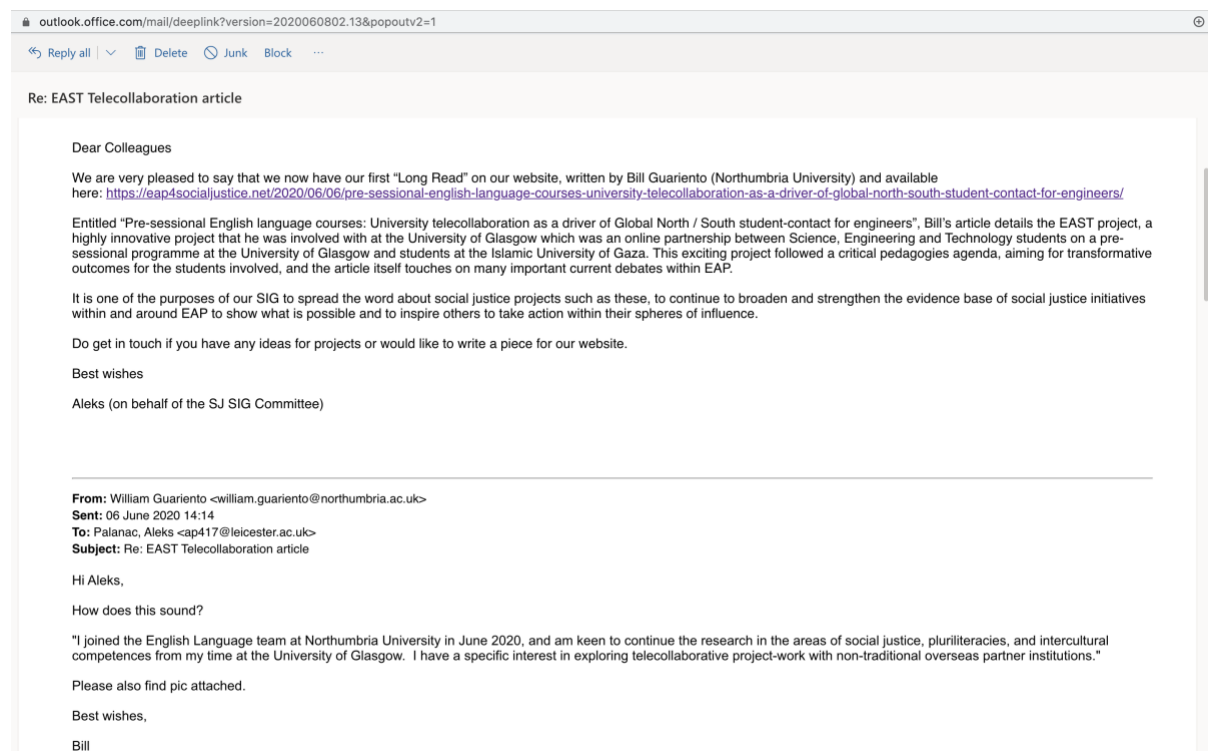
Both the School of Modern Languages and Cultures and the School of Education have gained great experience in online pedagogies over the past four years, and as the Middle East is a part of the globe that is still under-represented within the University's internationalisation agenda, the upsides for the Islamic University of Gaza and the University of Glasgow are very clear. For further details or to talk through ideas for future growth, [Bill Guariento](#) (English for Academic Study) and [Giovanna Fassetta](#) (School of Education) would love to hear from you.

Knowledge Exchange Output 6:

British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes webinar: 14/3/19, 'Telecollaboration with the Global South', <https://www.baleap.org/event/webinar-telecollaboration>

Knowledge Exchange Output 7:

British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes Social Justice Special Interest Group 'Long Read': 6/6/2020. 'Pre-sessional English language courses: university telecollaboration as a driver of Global North / South student-contact for engineers',



outlook.office.com/mail/deeplink?version=2020060802.13&popoutv2=1

Reply all | Delete | Junk | Block

Re: EAST Telecollaboration article

Dear Colleagues

We are very pleased to say that we now have our first "Long Read" on our website, written by Bill Guariento (Northumbria University) and available here: <https://eap4socialjustice.net/2020/06/06/pre-sessional-english-language-courses-university-telecollaboration-as-a-driver-of-global-north-south-student-contact-for-engineers/>

Entitled "Pre-sessional English language courses: University telecollaboration as a driver of Global North / South student-contact for engineers", Bill's article details the EAST project, a highly innovative project that he was involved with at the University of Glasgow which was an online partnership between Science, Engineering and Technology students on a pre-sessional programme at the University of Glasgow and students at the Islamic University of Gaza. This exciting project followed a critical pedagogies agenda, aiming for transformative outcomes for the students involved, and the article itself touches on many important current debates within EAP.

It is one of the purposes of our SIG to spread the word about social justice projects such as these, to continue to broaden and strengthen the evidence base of social justice initiatives within and around EAP to show what is possible and to inspire others to take action within their spheres of influence.

Do get in touch if you have any ideas for projects or would like to write a piece for our website.

Best wishes

Aleks (on behalf of the SJ SIG Committee)

From: William Guariento <william.guariento@northumbria.ac.uk>
Sent: 06 June 2020 14:14
To: Palanac, Aleks <ap417@leicester.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: EAST Telecollaboration article

Hi Aleks,

How does this sound?

"I joined the English Language team at Northumbria University in June 2020, and am keen to continue the research in the areas of social justice, pluriliteracies, and intercultural competences from my time at the University of Glasgow. I have a specific interest in exploring telecollaborative project-work with non-traditional overseas partner institutions."

Please also find pic attached.

Best wishes,

Bill

Pre-sessional English language courses: university telecollaboration as a driver of Global North / South student-contact for engineers

Abstract

This paper discusses the potential offered by telecollaborative links between universities in the Global North and the Global South. It draws on data from the English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) project, an online pre-sessional partnership between Science, Engineering and Technology students at the University of Glasgow and at the Islamic University of Gaza. This is an ongoing project, now in its sixth year, which has attempted to follow a critical pedagogies agenda, and is examined here from a Freirean perspective. It looks for evidence of transformative outcomes for the students involved and analyses the extent to which a 5-week online collaboration can work to empower the most vulnerable of stakeholders, and to challenge received attitudes and practices. The paper concludes that pre-sessional English language telecollaboration that juxtaposes areas of peace and conflict can offer particular opportunities for the dialogue that, in Freire's view (1996: 69) leads, through action and reflection, to 'naming' - and thereby potentially changing - the world.

Introduction

In 1972, Michel Foucault co-founded the *Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP)* in France. The stated intent was:

....to make known what the prison is: who goes there, how and why they go there, what happens there, and what the life of the prisoners is, and that, equally, of the surveillance personnel; what the buildings, the food, and hygiene are like; how the internal regulations, medical control, and the workshops function; how one gets out...(Peters and Besley, 2014: 102)

Megaphone in hand, the *GIP* shouted over prison walls, and the prisoners shouted back. The intent was to allow the prisoners' voices to be heard, and to render salient to wider French

society their prison system, and an underlying societal control that most were happy to leave invisible and unquestioned.

This paper argues that the current Western model of Higher Education has effectively created a ‘wall’, similar to that highlighted by Foucault, which works to exclude students from less privileged parts of the world. It suggests that new affordances presented by telecollaboration may allow students from the Global South to ‘talk back’ (Pennycook, 1998), revealing - as did Foucault’s *GIP* – the difficulties they experience and the underlying power imbalances; challenging problems of inclusion/exclusion and social justice; and enhancing awareness of different contexts and ways of being and doing.

The paper does so by looking at a telecollaborative project that has linked pre-sessional English language students in science-related subjects at the University of Glasgow with their peers at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG): the English for Academic Study Telecollaboration (EAST) project.

Since 2012, the inhabitants of Gaza have been to all effects imprisoned by border-closures imposed by Israel and Egypt; it is difficult in fact to imagine any area in the world where the analogy to Foucault’s wall is more apposite. EAST represents an attempt to overcome this isolation for Gazan students, while providing Glasgow-based students with the language practice that will enable them to enter their chosen courses at the University of Glasgow. Over a five-week period every summer since 2015, Glasgow-based students have engaged in telecollaborative tasks with peers in Gaza to try to find solutions to Gaza-specific engineering challenges using English as the medium for communication.

This paper starts with an overview of Foucault’s theories of power, relating them specifically to the current internationalisation agenda within the UK higher education system. It then looks at the affordances of telecollaboration with overseas partners, focusing specifically on one area that offers real potential, but which has been neglected to date: telecollaborative partnerships between the Global North and South¹². Using the (extreme) case of Gaza, it exemplifies this potential - and the many challenges - through an analysis of data gathered from five iterations of EAST held to date. It concludes that pre-sessional students based in

¹² ‘Global North/South’ describes a political / economic division of the world, rather than geographic.

the Global North and their peers in the Global South can mutually gain, in terms both of enhanced language skills and of increased intercultural awareness.

Literature review

Higher Education: the power to exclude

In his seminal work *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault built on his work with the *GIP* to outline the wider way that power works in contemporary society. He went on to develop the concept of ‘governmentality’ (Foucault, 1994a), that is, the creation of the ‘correct’ types of subjects not by overt coercion, but through suggestion, resulting in the internalising of discipline and self-policing practices by a given person or wider community (Foucault, 1994b). He terms these limits (1994c: 131) “regimes of truth”, working to provide (usually unaware) subjects with the boundaries within which they may shape themselves, and beyond which they will struggle to act. Foucault describes the indirect control that results (1994c: 341) as the “conduct of conduct”. Concepts linked to governmentality are of direct relevance to issues currently facing higher education.

Within universities worldwide, the dominant regime of truth since the early 1980s has been one driven by a neoliberal ethos (Torres, 2011; Shor et al., 2017), marked by competition for resources and for students. This growing marketisation of higher education has also occurred in the UK, where there has long been pressure (Davies, 2006; Barnett, 2007; Fazackerley, 2019) to provide students with the ‘value’ that the fees introduced in the 1990’s warrant, a phenomenon that van der Wende (2017) has termed ‘academic capitalism’. Faculties need to justify themselves on economic grounds, hence quality needs to be quantifiable, leading to what Morrissey (2015: 615) describes as “a new academic subjectivity defined by accountability and performance”. Subject-areas within the arts and humanities have been particularly susceptible to cuts and closures (Ball, 2016). Shor et al. (2017: 5) make a link between these growing constraints and the ‘conduct of conduct’, stating that institutions, schools and universities now function as “disciplinary instruments”, rewarding with more privilege those who already hold privilege; they argue that an institutional predilection of ranking for ‘quality’ actually hides an underlying attempt at subordination, i.e. a coded narrative to justify *inequality*. Directly referencing Foucault, they claim that since the late

1970s universities have deliberately allowed less space for unearthing “subjugated knowledges” and “disqualified discourses” (Shor et al., 2017: 4). Postcolonial (Nyamnjoh, 2016) and feminist (Naples, 1998; Hekman, 2018) paradigms offer ways forward that foreground an emotional and a political resistance to this regime of truth.

However, many doubt whether healthy research and levels of curiosity (see e.g. Giroux, 2002; Shor et al., 2017) or even a basic ethics of care (Atkins, 2009; Lorey, 2015; Jeffery, 2018) can continue to flourish under such a market-led ethos. Such financial imperatives have helped drive significant increases (Otten, 2003; Boden and Epstein, 2006) in the numbers of international students.

Internationalisation and Diversity

In the academic year 2016/17, students from outwith the European Union amounted to 13% of the total student-body in the UK (UKCISA, 2018). These numbers ought in theory to bring an increased diversity on campus and the students, whether domestic or international, to be benefiting from this intermingling and the opportunity for “re-invention” (Coleman, 2015: 42) that it can provide. However, this is often not the case. Firstly, most such mobilities involve moves from one Global North country to another (van der Wende, 2017: 6). Secondly, the very significantly higher non-EU overseas student-fees also mean that any students from the Global South generally come from relatively privileged backgrounds, and from markets that provide easy routes for student-recruiters; at UK level, Chinese students predominate, and made up 32% of non-EU international students in 2016/17 (UKCISA, 2018). In short, the growth in overseas student numbers doesn’t necessarily mean a proportionate growth in diversity, whether in terms of social background or of L1.

If one problem is the lack of diversity among incoming student-groups, another is the fact that those students who *are* able to travel from the Global South to the UK for a university education often find that contacts with home-based students are quite rare or, when they do occur, remain superficial (Coleman [2015]; see also Bargel [1998] re mobilities to Germany; Gurin [1999] re the USA). Ideally students would be able to attend dedicated courses in inter-cultural communication that allow them to juxtapose their own ethnic and cultural identities with those of others (Crosbie, 2014: 97), even to discover and explore how the wider framework of power relations (as outlined by Foucault) might impact these identities (Kumaravadivelu, 2008: 107). But few degrees can find space for such courses in-sessionally,

in already crowded timetables, and as a result there is a danger that any study period spent abroad will have only a limited sociocultural value (see Roberts et al., 2001; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Wells et al., 2019), with surprisingly limited on-campus possibilities for meaningful intercultural contacts. Otten (2003: 15) usefully summarises the rarity / superficiality of the contacts that can result as “exchange without encounters”.

Increasing diversity via telecollaboration

One way to address this lack of diversity is via telecollaboration, which O’Dowd and O’Rourke (2019: 1) define as:

... bringing together groups of learners from different cultural contexts for extended periods of online intercultural collaboration and interaction. This is done as an integrated part of the students’ educational programmes and under the guidance of educators or expert facilitators.

The lack of diversity among the incoming student-population ought, in theory, to favour the development of telecollaborative contact with international students from less privileged backgrounds, thereby presenting interesting issues of content, identity and power while addressing a social justice agenda, and Kumaravadivelu (2008: 107) suggests that such encounters, outwith the Global North, can lead to truly transformative change for those involved¹³. However, Helm (2015: 204) notes that links with the Global South are in fact relatively unusual, and more recent studies (see e.g. Plutino et al., 2019; Turula et al., 2019) still present an overwhelmingly Global North focus (the latter albeit from a social justice perspective). While stating that “the promotion of understanding across national and cultural divides.... is more pressing than ever”, O’Dowd and O’Rourke (2019:4) include only one mention of telecollaborative projects involving Global South partners (Soliya, discussed below). Projects that *do* involve Global South partners rarely touch on the most disadvantaged: Starke-Meyerring and Wilson’s 2008 overview of telecollaborations included partners in Mexico, China, Brazil and Nicaragua; all still qualified for Overseas Development

¹³ Though variations in ease of connectivity must be acknowledged, IT infrastructure in the Global South has improved markedly in recent years.

Assistance in 2020, yet only the last is currently defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019) as a Lower Middle Income Country.

Examples of engagement with poorer and/or more politically isolated areas are therefore rare, but they do exist: Imperiale (2017), writing of a collaboration with Palestine, discusses a telecollaborative English course enabling English literature students to move beyond competence models in order to ‘write back’ (Pennycook, 1998; Holliday, 2007), expressing their creativity, imagination and above all cultural resistance via poetry; Fassetta et al. (2017) also talk of a telecollaborative project, involving the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language, again in Palestine, and again purposed for cultural resistance; moving beyond Europe, Kramsch (2013) describes a telecollaborative project linking learners of English literature in the USA and in Iran. Such HE interventions using telecollaborative approaches to raise learners’ awareness of a range of challenging situations are cheering, particularly as they involve areas of the world (Palestine and Iran) that have been ‘othered’ (Saïd, 1993) for decades. However, the number of participants involved in these partnerships tends to be small, and it is also interesting to notice limitations in the *range*, in terms of subject-matter, of these interventions, which all have a focus on language, arts and the humanities. O’Dowd (2013), looking at barriers to telecollaboration between European universities, presents seven case-studies, five of which (like the works cited previously) involve link-ups between arts and humanities students.

Intercultural dialogue with the Global South involving the arts and humanities – areas which, as we have seen, are particularly threatened by the market-led ethos currently driving UK higher education - is of course to be welcomed, but this paper argues that similar Global North-South dialogue is *also* needed, in other fields. The next section focuses on one such area, Science, Engineering and Technology (SET)-related subjects, an area that the author’s home university was keen to develop. Given the centrality of this field to the overall neo-liberal regime of truth (Foucault, 1994c), and specifically its centrality to the neoliberal agenda within higher education discourses (Morrissey, 2015), this is in fact precisely *why* an intercultural dialogue involving social justice issues must be championed for SET students.

Engineering and Telecollaboration

SET as a field has attracted growing attention in terms of intercultural studies, but conventionally not from any desire to ‘write back’ or to overcome barriers to social justice. If HE course-providers in the Global North now emphasise the need to enhance their students’ ability to interact with peers across cultures, it is principally as a reflection of employers’ concerns regarding graduate-employability. Katehi & Ross (2007), for example, would include intercultural competence (ICC) as a key ‘professional awareness’ element to any well-grounded tertiary-level engineering course; Downey et al. (2006) note specifically the importance of ICC in enabling the problem-solving element of engineering roles; Schaeffer et al. (2012) focus on the need to develop actual cross-border contacts between students as a means of achieving this ICC; O’Dowd (2012) outlines an unusual *poetry*-based link-up between Swedish engineering students and students of English in the USA, taking advantage of the fact that all Swedish engineering programmes have a Man, Society and Technology (MST) requirement.

These are all valid examples of virtual mobility, via telecollaboration, in the field of engineering, but each focuses on the creation of links *within* the Global North. Some initiatives to tap into the creation of North-South SET contacts afforded by the Internet do exist; in the UK, Engineers Without Borders is an example. Each year, a different country or region around the world sends UK universities a broad list of societal challenges (for instance, in 2017/18 from Tanzania, and in 2018/19 from the state of Tamil Nadu in India), and participating UK-based students then choose which to investigate. The students aim to provide a workable, low-tech response to the problem they have chosen, while the programme itself aims to offer “a change of mindset so that the social and environmental impact that engineering can have is recognised” (Engineers Without Borders, 2017). UK-based students can gain valuable learning experiences, and inexpensive and sustainable resources of applicability in the target regions may even result. However, the engagement is purely theoretical, and opportunities for intercultural awareness-raising are limited by the absence of encounters with the potential end-users of any solutions that are proposed.

A programme that does provide such encounters is Soliya, an EU telecollaborative initiative that “aims to expand the reach and scope of the Erasmus+ programme through [...] technology-enabled people-to-people dialogues sustained over a period of time” (Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange). Soliya specifically targets the Southern Mediterranean, and Global North / South partnerships have resulted with universities in Morocco, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan,

aiming for “a deeper understanding for the perspectives of others around the world on important socio-political issues”, and to develop “21st Century skills such as critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, and media literacy” (Soliya website). The stated aim is the exploration of reasons for friction between the Arab/Muslim and the Western worlds and to “facilitate dialogue between students from diverse backgrounds across the globe” (ibid), thus helping to attain the Council of Europe’s (2008) goals for intercultural communicative competence and intercultural dialogue. It also meets principles of Islamic dialogue which Ashki (2006: 6) defines as “a type of communication between people that respects the differences of ‘the Other’, which allows for true listening in a safe environment that offers possibilities for the transformation of self-awareness in each individual”. But, as their website states, Soliya is once again “most commonly integrated into the schools of arts, humanities, social sciences, languages, and international studies”; students studying the sciences are, it acknowledges, represented less frequently.

To summarise, there is a recognised value in broadening engineering education to embrace collaboration with students in other countries, to develop the social skills / inter-cultural competences that co-operation and teamwork can foster. However, busy timetables can be an issue, and interventions that occur tend to provide somewhat superficial contact, focusing on employability skills. If they do involve face-to-face contact, via telecollaboration, this tends to be intra-Global North.

The EAST project: a critical pedagogies SET telecollaboration with the Global South

Telecollaboration and critical pedagogy: a digital megaphone?

This section describes the workings of EAST, a project which aims to develop a Global North – South link for SET students using a critical pedagogies approach, i.e. one that moves beyond employability, to touch on questions of power imbalance, and social and political justice, using telecollaboration as a tool.

The concept of critical pedagogies developed from the seminal work of Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), linking ongoing social injustices to structural imbalances within the educational system. Freire, writing originally in the early 1970s, argued that

schools exist to maintain the status quo, and that educators support an invidious ‘banking’ system (ibid: 58), one which views students as mere ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ and readied for a life in which the ability to question or think critically is unnecessary, even dangerous. However, Freire argued that students can develop their full societal potential by questioning authority and, in particular, if they are made aware of their own position within the power-structures that shape their education, a process that he termed ‘conscientization’. Parallels with Foucault’s thinking on power can be drawn, and Giroux (2020: 717) - in an article on Freire’s work – writes that if students can develop “a healthy scepticism about power”, there are real possibilities for an openness to innovative change that might challenge the status quo.

Talking specifically of telecollaboration, Lamy and Goodfellow (2010: 124) note that, “computer-mediated communication has implications for the breaking down of the transmission approach, with consequent implications for the authority of the teacher, the institution, and the hierarchical structure of the education system in general.” In the ‘breaking down of the transmission approach’ we see Freire’s desired overturning of a ‘banking system’, and in ‘authority’ and ‘hierarchy’ we can see reflected Foucauldian issues of power, discussed previously. Foucault, in working with the *GIP*, aimed to highlight the isolation of prisoners from society, and to afford them a voice. There is a clear parallel between the situation facing the prisoners that Foucault highlighted, and that of the exclusion facing students in the Global South. Koehn and Obamba (2014) outline barriers dividing Western education systems from those in the Global South, which are figurative (yet very real); in the case of Palestine, the barriers consist of *physical* walls, and the Gaza Strip in particular is a territory that in over a decade of blockade has become what some now refer to as an open-air prison (Aouragh, 2001; Tawil-Souri, 2015). One aim of the EAST project has been to reveal, in a way that mirrors Foucault’s work with the *GIP*, the harsh conditions of the confinement experienced by Gazans, ‘calling over the walls’ to highlight specific impact of blockade and travel restrictions on the hopes and aspirations of young people there. Given that virtual tools and communication strategies already form the basis of Palestinians’ everyday transgressing of boundaries in order to overcome the state of social and political isolation that has been imposed on them (Fassetta et al, 2017), the use of online tools in order to ‘talk back’ and to highlight issue of social justice may be particularly fruitful for students in the Gaza Strip.

In adapting a critical pedagogies approach to include the internet (which didn't exist when Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), it must be acknowledged that technology is not neutral; our uses of technologies reflect underlying economic, geographical and cultural power systems (Belz and Thorne, 2005: xviii). Shor et al. (2017: 13) go even further, stating that "technology has been a one-way monologue so loud and pervasive as to exclude critical dialogue about what technology applications mean or engender, or who benefits." In other words, telecollaboration carries its own power-related baggage. However, if we accept that there is a pressing value in linking the Global North and South, then it is difficult to envisage (short of student-mobility - a theme returned to later in this paper) a means of critically linking North and South students that avoids telecollaboration. Guth and Helm (2011: 16) argue that technology can afford new spaces to its users and new forms of interaction (they term it a "relationship revolution") that can challenge traditional power dynamics, while Shor et al. (2017: 14), though clearly doubting the institutional motivations behind the proliferation of online learning initiatives, go on to concede that technology "may be used by ingenious critical teachers to develop students as activists who question knowledge and power in their society". In short, telecollaboration can be developed as a means to foster communication, and might conceivably function as a vehicle for the critical dialogue that is central to Freire's approach.

A pluriliteracies approach to the development of intercultural awareness

EAST is a telecollaborative link which operates under various constraints. It takes place *pre-sessionally*, i.e. before Glasgow-based international students matriculate, and is a project-based adjunct to an already-existing English language course. Pre-sessional courses are summer language programmes held by host universities in the Global North. They cater for overseas students whose abilities in English are almost at the level required, and their aim is attainment of a university-certified score equivalent to a Secure English Language Test (such as IELTS or TOEFL), which allows direct entry to the bachelors or masters course the students have chosen. In terms therefore of content, academic, subject-specific language skills must remain the main focus of the overall course, to which EAST is an accompaniment, taking place mainly outside the classroom. The final constraint is one of duration; EAST can last only five weeks.

Despite such constraints, since its introduction in summer 2015, EAST has aimed to broaden the reach of SET-specific language-enhancement provision at the University of Glasgow by providing critical-pedagogies-informed project work. Such project work has a solid theoretical underpinning in the expansion over the past 20 years, particularly in Europe, of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (see e.g. Pérez-Cañado, 2012; Cenoz et al., 2014; Dalton-Puffer et al, 2014), in which the subject is taught via the target language. An overseas telecollaboration allows the addition of intercultural learning opportunities. O'Dowd (2018: 14) summarises the COIL approach (Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning) to telecollaboration that EAST has followed as “the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, including intercultural competence and critical thinking, while working on shared subject content and also providing [students] with different cultural perspectives on their subject area”.

Goris et al. (2019) specifically note the affordances for an increased sense of belonging to an international community, and EAST has in fact developed its original CLIL-based pedagogy to take on elements of a ‘pluriliteracies’ approach, an extension of CLIL in which students are pushed (via the content-requirements of their project work) to be working at a cognitive level that is more demanding than that of their grammatical ability, i.e. of what Coyle (2015) terms their ‘vehicular language’. The problem-posing nature of EAST is central to the development of critical awareness (Freire, 1996: 65) and the built-in need for communication creates extra demands that are crucial for effective learning; as Coyle puts it (2015: 90), deep learning needs to “involve social settings where learners are enabled to articulate their learning before internalising their own interpretation of these concepts on an individual basis”.

The development of ‘context’

The strength of the EAST project is that it provides these ‘social settings’, i.e. the ‘contexts’ which are so important to a Freirean approach that combines learning and social justice.

The Gazan students initially provide various Gaza-specific engineering challenges, and there are few places in the world with so many; three recent wars, coupled with the ongoing blockade by Israel and Egypt, mean that construction materials and mechanical parts are in very short supply. They then mentor the Glasgow-based students (who come principally

from China, with significant numbers from Saudi Arabia, and then from a range of other countries) by providing feedback on the responses that these Glasgow-based students propose. The feedback received from Gaza by the Glasgow-based students over the 5-week duration of EAST is content-specific, with no language-related help, in order to ensure that exit scores in language tests at the end of the pre-session course are a true reflection of Glasgow-based students' language abilities.

The students who arrive in Glasgow in mid-July to study English for Academic Purposes via the pre-session course may sometimes know a little about Gaza, but more often have never heard of it. Even students from the Middle East, who know something of the political background to the Palestine-Israel conflict, tend to lack a true understanding of the economic and humanitarian scale of the problems that the people of Gaza face on a daily basis, and of the ever-present fear of war. And for the few who can be said to arrive in Glasgow with some idea of this scale, it remains nevertheless in the abstract.

Since course-organisers in Glasgow are unable to know beforehand which applicants will in fact materialise from overseas on Day 1, awareness-raising activities for incoming students, prior to their arrival in Scotland, are not feasible. In a plenary lecture on the first afternoon, students newly-arrived in Glasgow are briefly introduced to IUG, and view a video in which they hear a short message from their soon-to-be partners. Glasgow-based students are immediately asked to form small groups (ideally of three) around Gazan engineering-based problems, which the students in Gaza have already identified and sent to the course organisers in Glasgow. For the Glasgow-based students, these groupings are (as far as is possible, given the preponderance of Mandarin-speakers), cross-lingual; a typical Glasgow-group might thus contain two students from China and one from Saudi Arabia, so that even within the Glasgow nexus, an intercultural element is in-built. The next day, course-organisers set up Facebook groups linking Glasgow-based pairs with those based in Gaza. At the end of this week, class-time is dedicated to ensuring that the Glasgow/Gaza groups meet via Skype, Zoom or WhatsApp, initially discuss the problem they will be researching, and get to know one another.

Purely Facebook-mediated student-to-student interactions create an insufficient bond between participants, so face-to-face encounters are timetabled to take place in Week 1 within lesson-time, leading students to feel greater ownership of the evolving collaboration,

and to better understand the responsibilities involved (the Glasgow students to their Gazan partners, who have to live with very significant hardships on a daily basis; the Gazan students to their Glasgow partners, whose transition to masters study depends heavily on a successful project-outcome).

The bond created in Week 1 is fundamental to the intercultural learning opportunities that follow over the subsequent four weeks of EAST. Each class has a Writing teacher, who monitors progress on each Glasgow-based student's Gaza-related Subject-Specific Essay, and a Speaking teacher, who ensures that class members are ready for a teleconferenced presentation, delivered in tandem by the Glasgow-based and Gazan students in Week 5. But it is important to stress that the bulk of the lessons are English for Specific Academic Purposes inputs, aimed at developing disciplinary literacies in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing skills, and are not tied-in to the subject-matter of the students' EAST projects in any way. It is therefore fundamental that, from the outset, the students feel able to work with their partners in Gaza in autonomy, outside class-time, on whatever SET challenge they have chosen. It is via the Week 1 bond, fostered via a synchronous meeting timetabled in-class, that opportunities for solidarity-building, witnessing and ethics of care (to be discussed later in this paper) will be constructed.

A pre-EAST course, Constructive Feedback (Rolinska and Guariento, 2017) is given to the Gazan students by the course organisers in Glasgow. This is a short online course aiming to help the students in Gaza develop an understanding of how to make use of effective techniques when offering generic feedback, providing skills that will enable the IUG students to support the Glasgow-based students (but which are also purposed to be of value in gaining online work once EAST ends).

The EAST project through a Freirean lens

We have seen that previous attempts to justify telecollaborative exchanges for the development of intercultural awareness among engineering students have been made on the grounds of future graduate-employability but (as Starke-Mayerring and Wilson noted in 2008), in moving beyond competence models, a social justice approach provides a rationale for collaborative work that can be particularly compelling.

However, many facets of the role that telecollaborative interaction between engineering students in the Global North and the Global South can and should play - in particular, the space for a critical pedagogies approach - are challenging to implement. Here we look at the extent to which the EAST project may be said to meet Freire's critical pedagogies precepts. He breaks his capability approach down into four basic stages: selecting a generative theme; codifying this theme; problematising the theme; action (Freire, 1996).

Selecting a generative theme

Freire (1996: 64) suggests that the themes to be examined should be context-specific. Ideally they should emerge from discussion with the subjects or, failing that, from issues that they feel strongly about. The sheer numbers of participants in EAST (196 between Glasgow and Gaza in 2019) precludes Freire's workshop approach to this stage, but a principal strength of EAST is that the engineering challenges are closely related to a context, one provided by the Gazan students and relating the need for engineering answers to the wider (and pressing) needs of Gazan society. Glasgow-based participants are presented with a range of four or five engineering issues to choose from on Day 1, and this choice (within admittedly limited parameters) is an attempt to maintain the democratic principles which are central to Freire's approach.

Codifying the theme

Codifications can be considered "concrete representations of an aspect of people's lived reality" (Beck and Purcell, 2013: 3), an attempt to develop how we see ourselves in the world, and society in ourselves (Freire, 1996: 47), and in EAST this stage differs very markedly from Freire's. For Freire, students should be developing a 'conscientization' of their own position as oppressed figures. However, it would be inaccurate to describe the majority of Glasgow-based students on the EAST project as 'oppressed' (in any Freirean meaning of the term), as they tend to come from privileged sections of their home communities. For this reason, they need to understand, as far as is possible, what it means to live 'in the shoes' of the Gazan partners they will be working alongside. Where Freire used OHP slides reflecting back basic themes from the lives of his participants to engender 'lived reality', EAST uses videos: a general video on life under blockade in Gaza (The Guardian:

2018); and in some cases engineering-challenge-specific videos produced pre-EAST by the IUG participants, to afford the Glasgow-based participants some idea of what living this reality might involve (see the following example from the EAST website:

<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/2016/10/13/a-video-from-gaza/#more-592>).

Problematizing the theme

This stage has seen the most change over the five iterations of the EAST project. Initially, in 2015, interactions between Glasgow and Gaza took place via Facebook, in the students' own time. However, not only did some students engage too slowly with their respective partners (time, in a 5-week project, is absolutely of the essence) but, more importantly, there was a qualitative shortfall. For Freire (1996: 90), a true exploration of the contradictions inherent in any codification, and the societal factors underpinning these contradictions, can only come about through critical engagement as a result of actual dialogue (he actually *specifies* conversation, rather than written interaction). From EAST 3, the timetabling of a precious teaching-slot during which students 'meet' their individual partners via videolink (Skype, Zoom or Whatsapp) to discuss the engineering problems together has proven very effective in burrowing down swiftly into the wider cultural, societal and political impacts. The Glasgow-based students realise that they are dealing with something tangible, something that impacts directly on people's lives. The inclusion of these sessions within class-time has allowed the teacher to be present, to monitor and assist, performing a facilitation role similar to that of the 'investigator' as outlined by Freire (1996:93), or to Foucault's holding of the megaphone to enable the voices of the excluded to be heard (in Peters and Besley, 2014: 102).

Action

This final stage is key to Freire's concept of 'praxis', i.e. the idea that thought can and must become action that changes a given situation, a change that then becomes the catalyst for further thought, and further change. In theory, EAST participants will enter this ongoing cycle of thought-change-new thought with each of the ongoing interactions that follow on from the initial, teacher-facilitated videolink at the end of Week 1. In other words, the remaining four weeks of EAST provide students with a cycle of questioning and exploration - a dialogue that invites student to reflect, to be creative, and, rather than simply 'banking' pre-

digested information, to develop as activist citizens (Freire, 1996: 65) based around their chosen engineering issue, allowing intercultural learning to occur inductively.

Overall, there are considerable points of difference from Freire's conception of a critical pedagogy here; the Gazan students adopt a less active role than that envisaged by Freire, and from Week 1 onwards, student-student interactions take place without the oversight of a facilitating teacher. However, from a Freirean perspective, the concept of concrete action remains an arbiter of a successful intervention, and is embodied in the joint video-presentation in Week 5. Freire has been criticised (e.g. Elias and Merriam, 1980) for the abstraction with which he outlined his critical pedagogies approach, but in fact this very abstraction provides a malleability that can lead to adaptation and to the embrace of new technologies.

At the same time, it must be emphasised that the students at the two institutions have not been able to operate as equals, and the following section will look at possible reasons for this, at macro-, meso- and micro-levels.

Imbalance: the project sites

Differences in power and wealth at the macro-level are marked indeed. The UK is a wealthy Western European country, ranked 14th in the UNDP Human Development Index (2019) and is privileged in power terms, too, as one of five permanent members of the United Nations. Palestine is in the Middle East, ranked 119th in the Human Development Index (ibid), within which the Gaza Strip forms a poorer, non-contiguous part. Palestine as a whole was under British mandate until 1948 and since 1967 has been under Israeli occupation. While the direct occupation of the Gaza Strip ended in 2005, it remains under de facto Israeli control, with very strict limits on entry / egress of both goods and people. Recent statistics on this part of Palestine are telling; 34% of Gaza's population live in 'deep poverty', 44% are unemployed and, as a result of protracted crisis due to blockade by Israel and Egypt, family incomes have fallen significantly since 2011 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The Gaza Strip is also isolated not just geographically and economically, but also politically; Palestine is recognized as a state by many countries, but not by (for example) the UK or USA, and Palestine is also divided internally in political terms, with different ruling authorities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

At a meso-level, the two institutions also differ significantly in terms of power and wealth. The University of Glasgow is a research-driven Russell Group university ranked in the top 100 global universities (THE, 2020). It attracts large numbers of international students every year, while at IUG the geopolitical isolation described above also leads to a near-impossibility of physical movement (whether incoming or outgoing), either by students or staff, and concomitant challenges in the creation and maintenance of research networks. Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) are however well-developed in both institutions – as virtually the only opportunity for any form of employment beyond the Gaza Strip is found online (Fassetta et al., 2017), IUG has recognised and prioritised ICT as one of the only ways to overcome the restriction on physical movement / the economic blockade described above. The power differences relating to language are also relatively small; in Glasgow, course administrators are working in their L1 (a fact that confers clear power advantages), but at IUG English is (with Arabic) one of the two official languages, and is spoken fluently by administrators.

Power differences at the micro-level, i.e. between the students, are perhaps the least marked, as the students involved on the EAST project are *all* non-native speakers of English (whether pre-sessionally in Glasgow, or in-sessionally at IUG), i.e. using English as a lingua franca. At both institutions they share a particular need (which they recognise) to improve their listening and speaking skills in English (Rolinska et al., 2018).

Methodology

The author's own knowledge of injustices facing Palestine, alongside previous socially-committed links between the University of Glasgow's School of Education and IUG (Hammond, 2012), meant that EAST organisers were able to adopt from the outset a Critical Reflective praxis (Benade, 2015), one that accepts that teaching is essentially a *political* act (Freire, 1998). EAST was designed to 'perturb' (Beetham and Sharpe, 2013), in this case by using the web to introduce both an emotional (Atkins, 2009) and a political (Naples, 1998) element to an already-existing pre-sessional programme.

However, for its first two years, 2015 and 2016, the project ran with no intended research element; the data gathered, predominantly from anonymised end-of-course questionnaires written in collaboration by University of Glasgow and IUG staff, were purposed to provide participant-feedback that might improve the project for students on any subsequent course, i.e. to evaluate whether and to what extent the telecollaborative element was beneficial to students in Glasgow and at IUG in terms of language skills and intercultural competence, rather than for research purposes. Via these questionnaires, in September 2016 course organisers in both institutions found themselves with what Bryman (2008: 530) terms “a data-set that was waiting for a research question” and an interest in taking the collaboration further.

These two initial years of EAST went beyond an evidencing of reciprocal benefit; they also allowed the development of reciprocal trust and respect. The first iterations of EAST confirmed that a joint social situation (Hekman, 2018) existed, serving to locate potential subject and object on the same critical plane, and this provided the foundation for subsequent research that followed a Participant Action Research (PAR) paradigm. Grant et al. (2008), while admitting that approaches to PAR vary widely, acknowledge the importance of the relationship-building (which took place in the first two years of EAST) to PAR initiatives, within which researcher and researched will need to work alongside one another very closely. They also highlight a continued need for ongoing reflection on the part of the researcher. In these ways PAR can be seen as a logical continuation of a Critical Reflective praxis. But they also stress that a central element of PAR is the attempt to produce action that may (maybe slowly and iteratively) act as a catalyst for social change and, furthermore, that PAR often puts an examination of power-relationships centre-stage. PAR is a paradigm that acknowledges a need for flexibility and is able to adapt to very considerable contextual constraints (Willis and Edward, 2014: 24) - in the case of EAST, the massive impacts of the blockade, and the institutional impact of the embedding within a pre-sessional course - but the data-collection tools outlined below deliberately sought, from EAST 3 onwards, to use a PAR methodology in order to gauge these two specific issues: change; and power.

For reasons of continuity, the anonymised end-of-course questionnaires used for EAST projects 1 and 2 (in 2015 and 2016) remained the main data-source for the EAST projects in 2017 through 2019. *Table 1* shows the growing dimensions of the project (particularly in

Glasgow), alongside a fairly constant (and unsurprising, given the SET field) preponderance of male students at both institutions.¹⁴

EAST 1, 2015: UofG	37 students (14 female)
IUG	20 students (7)
EAST 2, 2016: UofG	31 students (12)
IUG	21 students (7)
EAST 3, 2017: UofG	81 students (32)
IUG	23 students (8)
EAST 4, 2018: UofG	140 students (44)
IUG	52 students (22) (+ 10 students on waiting list)
EAST 5, 2019: UofG	171 students (67)
IUG	25 students (12)

Table 1: EAST project student numbers, 2015-2019

In total, 44 comments (by 41 students) taken from the anonymised post-course student feedback questionnaire are included in the findings section that follows; they are identified by ('Q') after each comment. Though these student comments represent the bulk of the data, the paper also draws on the following inputs: firstly, further contributions from students on the initial 2015 project, taken from Facebook exchanges ('F'), from end-of-course powerpoint slides ('PPT'), or from student comments and video-artefacts included on the EAST website; in addition, the author's own privileged position as course-organiser in Glasgow and as a legitimate outsider (Holliday, 2007) *vis-a-vis* the Gazans, allows a further perspective, namely field notes ('FN'), taken over the five years of EAST; finally, after the 2019 project, hypotheses gained from collection, analysis and coding of this data were used to inform a teachers' focus group facilitated by the author ('TF') with seven EAST teachers, held in March 2020. The teachers' perspective is also reflected by comments offered during the end-of-course teachers' meeting, the 'Annual Monitoring Review' ('AMR').

¹⁴ In 2018 an additional 12 overseas participants (not included in this total) joined from INACAP, Chile. In 2019, an additional 11 participants (not included in this total) joined from Malawi University of Science & Technology, 5 from Pontificia Universidad de Valparaiso, and 1 from INACAP. This paper reports only on the relationship between the University of Glasgow and IUG during EAST.

Along with quantitative data provided by closed questions (not exploited in this paper), the questionnaires posed the following open questions for each of the five years of the project to the students from both institutions:

- What was the greatest thing about participating in the project?
- What was the most challenging thing about participating in the project?
- What definitely needs to be improved/changed for the project to work better next time?
- How do you evaluate the project in terms of raising your cultural awareness? Can you give examples of how you developed it?
- Has the project changed you in any way as a person, for example in the ways in which you think or act?
- How do you evaluate the project in terms of increasing your knowledge of global issues such as climate change/crisis, poverty, etc? What global issues did you learn about?¹⁵

The Glasgow-based students were asked the following additional question:

- Your partner lives and works in completely different circumstances, often much more disadvantaged than yours. To what extent has the project affected your capacity for compassion and social justice?

Relevant responses to these questions from 2015 and 2016 were retrospectively coded to enable an exploration of themes of potential interest post-2016, and data-collection from EAST projects in 2017, 2018 and 2019 followed a qualitative content approach (Altheide, 2004), with further interplay between additional data collected from the students and from field notes leading in turn to an ongoing (re)conceptualisation of codes / refinement of themes. Data was collected following University of Glasgow ethical compliance procedures.

Ultimately, two research questions emerged, with sub-themes as below:

¹⁵ This question, and the final one, are demonstrably leading. Though I recognised this in 2017, they were left unchanged for subsequent gathering of data (again, to preserve overall continuity).

Research question 1: Is there evidence for transformative change for students?

- Making exclusion visible
- Raising intercultural awareness
- Students' personal transformation

Research question 2: What issues of power-imbalance are evident? How do these impact the students' experience?

- Institutional resistance
- Ethical challenges relating to power-imbalance

Findings

Research Question 1: Is there evidence for transformative change for students?

Making exclusion visible

In her seminal work *Creating Capabilities* (2013), Martha Nussbaum outlines a range of 'capabilities' which, realised through 'functionings', signal the effective freedom of an individual to choose a life that she has reason to value. Some of Nussbaum's ten 'central capabilities' – such as the rights to live a life of normal length; in health; and with control over one's environment – are, given the circumstances in which Gazans find themselves, truly hard to envisage at present, and realistically beyond the scope of small-scale education projects (Fassetta et al. 2020). But others – such as the capability "to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude...." (Nussbaum, 2013: 33) are certainly touched on in the first student comments which are reported in this section (as is another that Nussbaum includes, "...justified anger"). These initial contributions suggest that, in emotional terms, the EAST project has had value for some students in Gaza. Even if only online and for a short time, the EAST project can make the borders of exclusion more porous, using the internet (as Foucault used the *GIP*) to make the exclusion both visible *and* audible, and providing students

‘confined’ in Gaza with a way to let others know about the challenges they and their friends and family experience on a daily basis:

‘it was a bridge to many people to let them find out at least what Gaza is ...what is really happening here in Gaza...’ (Gaza, F: 2015)

‘Having new friends and understating how other people knew about Gaza’ (Gaza, Q: 2019)¹⁶

‘Listening to other people from other nationalities thinking with our problems and solve it is very supportive’ (Gaza, Q: 2016)

‘I also participate in raising cultural awareness about my country and its problems’ (Gaza, Q: 2016)

‘Make others aware about Gaza and its possibilities, real-situation problems, and culture’ (Gaza, Q: 2017)

‘It strengthened my confidence and my identity when I explained to them our suffering’ (Gaza, Q: 2018)

‘Think of all Palestinian students in Gaza who could not travel to pursue their education outside Gaza, who lost their scholarships, who were not able to attend conferences or participate in exchange programs, competitions, or internships’ (Gaza, F: 2015)

Alongside the desire to let the outside world know about the hardships and injustices facing the Palestinian people, an explicitly-stated pride in their own ‘culture’ or ‘identity’, also emerges, and the comments above exemplify too what Marie et al. (2018: 20) term ‘Sumud’, a word in Arabic that combines a personal *and* a collective steadfastness (i.e. ‘*Gaza and its possibilities....*’; ‘*my confidence and my identity*’).

¹⁶ Sic. Quotations from students/teachers are unedited.

The following comments reveal that some were saddened that a bridge to the wider world had revealed how little was known about Gaza, others conversely gladdened by learning of support outside the Strip:

‘For me the greatest thing is that our voice reach the world by let other people know about Gaza and I really surprised when students [based in Glasgow] say that he did not hear about Gaza City. I am pleased that we show them Gaza which is the beauty, love and life’ (Gaza, Q: 2017)

‘Also knowing that people in the other side of the world love us and also knowing a lot about us unlike what we were thinking’ (Gaza, Q: 2016)

‘Talking and discussing Gaza problem with an international student made me happy that there people care and had an interest about my home land’ (Gaza, Q: 2018)

‘Now I know that there are people who love us and want to help us’ (Gaza, Q: 2017)

Just as the comments above from IUG students contain references (e.g. ‘bridge’; ‘voice’; ‘love’; ‘care’) that suggest an emotional value to EAST, one in which there exists potential for “a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence” (Freire, 1996: 72), there is also evidence for a similar empathy being developed among the Glasgow-based students. Nussbaum talks of the importance of what she terms ‘affiliation’ (2013: 34), “to show concern for other human beings....to be able to imagine the situation of another”. We have seen that many Glasgow-based students come from relatively privileged backgrounds, and that organisers hope that some will be able to ‘walk in another’s shoes’. For these students it is often a first contact with people living in circumstances more challenging than their own:

‘It is quite sad to see some people having difficulties living’ (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

Yes, it affected much. After I know the live stander, I think I need do better to help them’ (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

‘Let us realize the current situation in other countries’ (Glasgow, Q: 2016)

'Understanding how do poor countries suffer' (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

'This kind of project will aware you that what is happening around us' (Glasgow, Q: 2016)

The dialogue between Glasgow and Gaza constitutes what Freire terms a 'praxis' (1996: 68), an action and reflection that allows students to 'name' the world and, by so doing, potentially to change it. Freire argues that speech-acts carry meaning; by witnessing them, Glasgow-based students are able to legitimise the Gazans' suffering. This is one key way in which exclusion is challenged, and this is also intertwined with important issues of identity (Hall and du Gay, 2011) that are also raised and addressed by EAST. Gazans are denied travel, and thereby denied so many of the chances – which most students can take for granted - to see themselves from alternate perspectives, and to develop the understanding of the plurality of identities that we all possess. Herrera (1992: 80) provides a parallel that illustrates how this can work. She talks as a primary school teacher from San Francisco, but working in a school in Cairo, which she gradually comes to see not as 'an Egyptian school', but simply as 'a school'; her identity as a primary school teacher subsumes her broader national identity, and (presumably) preconceptions that might serve to exclude. The interactions provided by EAST show that exclusion can be similarly overcome not just by showing the gravity of problems and challenges that may be peculiar to life in Gaza (as in the comments above), but also through the sheer *familiarity* of many of the engineering challenges proposed; the Glasgow-based students - from China, from Saudi Arabia, etc. - sometimes relate not only to the joy in many of the presentations, but also to the ubiquity of the situations they see. As course-organiser, sympathetic to and well-versed in the Palestinian struggle, the basic banality of the following engineering challenge (quite apart from the joy of its delivery) was a real eye-opener:

<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/another-video-from-gaza/#more-362> (EAST website). This student, presenting on traffic challenges in Gaza, was allowing no space for the researcher's own, stereotyped imaginings of victimhood, as emerges from the following comment, regarding the 2015 EAST presentation themes:

'Traffic, pesticides, litter, car-pollution....life in Gaza seems to throw up pretty similar problems to life here in Scotland!' (FN: 2015)

Moreover, as one teacher (herself of Arab background) noted:

‘Also some problems, e.g. Saudi students, may be shared with Gazans, for example political / societal, such as having to wait for a long time to get things done, but not for lack of money’ (TF: Teacher 7)

To conclude, whether by highlighting the challenges of life in Gaza, or the commonalities of identity between participants, the overcoming of exclusion (for the Gazan students in particular) has been a key achievement of EAST; where previous to the project many felt excluded, now some may (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019) feel that they *belong*.

Raising intercultural Awareness

We have seen that internationalisation in the UK is increasing, in response to a variety of global forces, but still leaves the overall student-experience as one of surprising homogeneity. We have likewise seen at IUG a lack of free movement, one that has led to an “enforced monoculturalism” (Imperiale et al., 2017: 43); there are very limited opportunities to study abroad, and incoming students are even rarer. Thus, there is a need to increase ICC in both institutions, and the opportunity to learn about cultures other than their own was a principal attraction mentioned by students both in Glasgow and at IUG:

‘I decided to participate in the EAST Project to meet new friends from different backgrounds and cultures’ (Gaza, Q: 2019)

‘It is my honour that can work with Arabians together, which is I never try it before. And they are very nice people and fill with passion’ (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

‘When I dealt with others with each one has its own culture, my view of the subject really changed...i actually get to know some cultures and really impressed by some’ (Gaza, Q: 2016)

This latter comment above is particularly important; the fact that most Gazan students work on EAST with a Glasgow-based pairing comprising *two different nationalities* (often Chinese

and Saudi) makes the inter-cultural element much more salient - as de Nooy (2006) notes, partnerships with a binary set-up and an overt ICC focus (such as Soliya) risk casting learners into a defensive representative of their culture, but a built-in three-way split in terms of nationality makes this less true of EAST. For some Gazans there was therefore the opportunity to *generalize* about the value of working interculturally (rather than of comments specific to an any one cultural grouping), as the following comments suggest:

'I learned how to respect the cultures of othersbefore the project it wasn't a big thing, but when I dealt with others with each one has its own culture, my view of the subject really changed...' (Gaza, Q: 2016)

'If you ask me what is the most useful thing that you take it from this project i will certainly say the knowledge about cultures, its great thing to share your ideas and thoughts with other people' (Gaza, Q: 2016)

'you have just know them, also you can get a full of useful when you chat with them about their habits, thoughts, living and many thing relating to their lives not just talking about the education or college :)' (Gaza, Q: 2016)

Overall, Glasgow-based students made fewer comments relating to a raising of intercultural awareness. It may be that the Gazans felt more strongly about the theme of interculturality (though it may also reflect the fact that Gazans were on holiday and had more free time, or that the Glasgow-based students were preoccupied with the pass/fail nature of the course). There is evidence elsewhere, however, that the inductive approach to raising intercultural awareness adopted by EAST could successfully impact Glasgow-based students as well; as Dix (2016: 155) puts it, “for a transformative process to occur, the problematic must become *my* problem or *our* problem, must be experienced as a construction or obstacle to be overcome.” Trying to find a solution to what starts out as engineering problems could touch on a multiplicity of very complex societal, environmental, and political issues. The following three example (taken from the author’s field notes during the Week 5 presentations) serve as illustrations, and highlight the importance of Freire’s underlying ‘context’:

'...this [Glasgow-based] group has learned that Optical Character Recognition software struggles to adapt successfully to the complexities of the Arabic script, but also that in

Gaza many have damage to their eyesight (due to the conflict / lack of access to adequate healthcare)’ (FN: 2016).

‘...this [Glasgow-based] group of civil engineers (2 Chinese / 1 Thai) propose a high-rise solution to the housing shortage. They learn that normal building materials = embargoed in Gaza, plus high-rise solution needs electricity for lifts. But power-cuts are so common!’ (FN: 2017).

‘Telecommunications engineers (1 Saudi / 1 Chinese) with wireless telephony focus; they propose GPS solutions, to help overcome the lack of addresses across the Gaza strip. They have learned that 4G mobile systems exist in Palestine, but only from Israeli providers’ (FN: 2017).

Hence students in Glasgow begin by working on an ostensibly subject-related issue, but something more serious may emerge, maybe from the students’ research, but (more fundamentally) from the interactions with the partner in Gaza to find, together, a contextually appropriate (Freire, 1996) response. It would of course be fascinating to know what the students really understand by the term ‘culture’, i.e. the extent to which students see its features as prescribed or essentialized (Holliday, 2007) along ethnic or national lines, but the comments are nonetheless interesting. However, there is evidence here to suggest that learning *beyond* the acquisition of language and content, i.e. learning of an intercultural nature, has taken place inductively, i.e. without overt training for the development of intercultural awareness and despite the time-constraints under which EAST operates. Bringing together those who have experienced peace in education with those whose education is marred by conflict and siege can thus, I feel, combine interculturality and subject-matter in a meaningful way.

Students’ Personal Transformation

We have seen that students appreciated the chance to learn about other cultures, but some also mentioned the opportunity to see perceptions of their *own* country through the eyes of another, and others even noted the most interesting final step in the raising of intercultural awareness, the opportunity for reflection and to project any learning back onto their *own* culture and a consideration of the social forces that may have formed meanings, beliefs and

behaviours that underpin it (Byram, 1997: 35). The following comments suggest that such deeper and personal transformation can occur for students on EAST, via extra-curricular activities and/or online exchanges between the partners, even though there is no space to timetable explicit intercultural awareness-raising activities:

The EAST project offered to my life a different experiment too; when [the Glasgow-based co-ordinator] asked Gazan students to film a short video about our problems, I considered that was a big challenge for me to stroll around the streets holding my camera, especially that my teams' problem was the road traffic and I faced some obstacles like interrogation by police. That experience made me a courageous and strong human. I was very happy to make that video because it transferred our suffering to the world, it was a clever idea.' (Gaza, F: 2015)

'In the project, I talked remotely with completely strange people, for the first time in my life, who are from very far country, talk different language, and have new culture to me. This opened my eye about new things, as not all people think the same way, so I should clarify new ideas for people. The idea that might seem obvious for me might not be that clear for other people...' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

'You will get astonished when you hear that i have learned many thing about the problems of my countries that i have never known it is existing' (Gaza, Q: 2016)

The students above reference instances ('made me a courageous and strong human'; 'opened my eye'; 'you will get astonished') that point to personal transformation. It would seem that a chance can be presented, telecollaboratively, for an encounter of significance, providing students with an 'authenticity of task' (see Guariento and Morley, 2001) that is a feature of the real world, but lacking in most UK pre-sessional programmes.

However, such authenticity also suggests a necessity for taking risks. In normal circumstances there is a positive pedagogical *benefit* to be gained from an approach to learning that places problem-solving at its core; As Wolfe and Alexander (in Coyle, 2015: 96) state, "argumentation and dialogue are not alternative patterns of communication; they are principled approaches to pedagogy". From Canagarajah's "cultural struggle" (2002: 196), through Mezirow's advocacy of "disorienting dilemmas" (2011), to Kumaravadivelu's

“disturbing dialogues” (2008: 181), there is a wealth of other research supporting similar approaches. Specific to the raising of intercultural awareness via telecollaboration, Ware & Kramsch (2005: 203) talk of the potential value of “extended episodes of misunderstanding”, and O’Dowd (2011: 351) of the “cultural rich points” that may emerge from moments of online friction. As the following comments suggest, there were certainly moments at which the online interactions were uncomfortable, even fraught:

‘At the beginning, I didn’t know much about Gaza. So I was very careful to talk about some sensitive issues like wars with them’ (Glasgow, Q: 2017)

‘Since we have different culture background, sometimes I just afraid I will offense their religion without attention’ (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

‘I find out that our group members from different countries think in different ways, so it’s hard to understand each other. We have to explain everything in detail’ (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

‘Due to the bad situation in Gaza, acquisition of competencies and improving the skills was very hard, this was the basic motivations to join in EAST project. At the beginning, I was worried about this experience and I will fail to communicate with another people who have another culture, thinking, language and another way to life, but as time passed, I started to know that it’s a lot easier than I thought. We had two video chatting then we complete chatting by writing, and we had a lot of fun and exchange cultures together. Actually, in the first discussion about our topic, we had a big misunderstanding and my partners were very angry and confused, then it went well. You know, this experience made me realize that I need to live more and be always happy’ (Gaza, Q: 2017)

The final student-comment, above, is quoted at length, as it seems to offer support to the many researchers who champion risk-taking, whether in the classroom or online. But it also highlights that these are risks which may well be magnified in any sudden, novel and high-stakes online contact between students in the Global North and South. The siege-related insecurities and fears make these dangers particularly salient in the case of Gaza (Phipps, 2014), and given the long-standing nature of the Palestinian struggle, Argenti and Schramm

(2012) argue for a possible *collectivised* trauma, one that may be transmitted inter-generationally, and which may add to any current trauma that IUG participants are carrying within. The following comments suggest the size of the impact on Glasgow-based participants:

'I just knew that there were wars in Gaza, but I didn't know to what extent they influence in daily life of the people there' (Glasgow, Q: 2016)

'can't believe the truth [of the situation in Gaza]' (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

'...the poverty and bombings....I couldn't begin to imagine the impact of this, let alone the students who knew nothing about Gaza' (TF: Teacher 5)

These comments align with Nussbaum's central capability of affiliation, allowing participants from a SET background (who might otherwise never have the opportunity) to learn about issues of social justice in the Global South. However, as the comments in this section have suggested, when contemplating work with the Global South in general, and with a country such as Palestine in particular, the relationship between risk-taking and personal transformation presents many challenges, and presages ethical issues that we shall examine shortly.

Research Question 2: Impact of power-imbalance

This section now presents evidence relating to research question 2: What issues of power-imbalance are evident? How do these impact the students' experience?

Institutional resistance

It is far from easy to separate the impacts on stakeholders at student-level and at institutional-level, as these are deeply interwoven; for example, a situation in which a student collaborates effectively despite perceptions of initial language-weaknesses might be seen as transformational for the student herself, but it might also reveal to course organisers / the wider institution just what their students are capable of when, via telecollaboration, local generative themes are linked (or as Freire [1996: 101] terms this, 'hinged') to larger social

contexts. But that inequalities also exist between the Global North and South at institutional level is of course no surprise; as Koehn and Obamba (2014: 74) note, these social contexts “both generate and reproduce structural power and epistemological hegemonies”, and “militate against the construction of symmetrical partnerships”.

Such issues of underlying structural power have been sufficiently visible to attract notice from participants at both institutions. Comments concerning the need for more reciprocity in the EAST set-up, suggesting a lack of ‘symmetrical partnership’, have come from the Glasgow-based students; they are able to see a bias towards the Global North institution at which they are studying, i.e. to note their own privilege. They feel that their Gazan partners ought to be allowed to:

‘....write a short essay formally evaluating the solutions provided by [Glasgow-based] sts - this could be in form of short academic presentations too, a couple of slides added on to the Glasgow sts' presentations’ (Glasgow, Q: 2015)

‘The initial presentation of the problem could be in form of a video - a more extensive presentation of the problem’ (Glasgow, Q: 2015)

‘IUG sts [should be] given access to Glasgow Library online databases during the project’ (Glasgow, Q: 2015)

Understandably, IUG students have made similar points, suggesting that the provision of the pre-EAST Constructive Feedback course, delivered to IUG participants as training prior to EAST and taking place before the Glasgow-based students arrive in Scotland, fails to compensate for the limited role that the IUG students assume during the actual EAST project:

‘May be if we swap the role so IUG students give the presentation and [Glasgow-based students] ask questions and giving feedback’ (Gaza, Q: 2016)

Some of the suggestions above have been acted upon in subsequent projects; the introductory videos already mentioned, explaining the social impacts of the engineering challenges facing Gaza, became integral to EAST from 2017 onwards, and in 2016 written feedback (both language and content) on IUG students’ output was provided, with the help of a British

Council ELTRA grant (although this couldn't be sustained, following the unexpected and significant increase in student numbers in Glasgow the following year). The idea of a reversal of roles – as suggested by the IUG students - would necessitate a near-complete rewrite of the accompanying course, to which EAST is an adjunct. The provision of IUG access to the University of Glasgow's library system was explored in depth before EAST 2017, but the computer systems can be made available only to matriculated students.

These reflect factors which are at play at institutional level that will not be visible to the participating students, nor amenable to change by course-organisers. Institutions may see benefits in collaboration of a wider nature than the immediately apparent benefit to the learner, and compromise is a key part of any institutional collaboration, if it is to develop in time and in a mutually beneficial way. Koehn and Obamba (2014: 14) point out that “many high-impact transnational research and development partnerships adopt an approach based on *complementarity and equity* (italics in original) rather than insisting on the pursuit of complete equality or symmetry between the Northern and Southern partners”. IUG administrators are active in overcoming the wider isolation imposed on their country by the Israeli/Egyptian blockade and, importantly to IUG as an institution, there is the important role that IUG plays within Gaza in training graduates in the employability skills that can enable them (as already mentioned) to find scarce jobs, in particular over the internet. Finally, there is almost certainly the kudos of working with a UK Russell Group university.

Ethical challenges relating to power imbalances

Tuhiwai Smith (2012: 18) notes that it is possible for academics in the Global North to develop “ways of working with indigenous groups on a variety of projects in an ongoing and mutually beneficial way”, but the EAST project has nevertheless raised significant ethical issues, which are discussed below. These emerge from both the data and from researcher reflexivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) on the factors that can influence a research project's design and the ethical implications of bias and power imbalance.

Three specific ethical conundra will be discussed:

- How freely can the IUG participants express their voices?
- Given a limited audience, why are IUG participants so eager to participate?

- Where does EAST sit within wider discourses?

Ethical conundrum 1: How freely can the IUG participants express their voices?

Some students show an awareness of where EAST sits within the wider institutional set-up and, significantly, its links with the world beyond, and express frustration, even anger, with this wider context. Given the gatekeeping nature of the pre-session course for the Glasgow-based students, the candour of the following comment (even within the anonymity of the post-course feedback forms) is noteworthy:

'I don't know why we have to do it since these work may not be feasible to the situation in those countries, I feel really bad for this. Are we just making day dreams?' (Glasgow, Q: 2019)

Unsurprisingly, in view of the economic blockade, of the permanent fear of bombardment, and of the political constraints on egress from the Strip, frustrated comments from the IUG students were more frequent. Risager (2007) argues that effective intercultural communication is one that allows participants to 'appropriate' the languages and cultures that are studied, without the need to disguise, or to lose, their own identities. One Gazan student began her presentation with a clear positioning, thus:

'Gaza strip located in historical Palestine which occupied by what called Israel since Nakba in 1947' (Gaza, PPT: 2018)

Although such overt expression of political frustration during EAST has been unusual in *public-facing* communication, the following comments in post-course feedback show that the frustration, even anger, certainly exists:

'When you talked about cause of problem you could add Israel occupation somehow because this unjust occupation is the main reason for every problem in Gaza' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

‘Our problem here in Gaza is purely political; therefore any solutions should be put forward be at the front of freedom and get ride from occupation and then come the role of scientific solution’ (Gaza, Q: 2018)

‘As a student in Gaza, I have encountered many difficulties and challenges, especially in the last war, where my older brothers have lost due to the brutal Israeli aggression’ (Gaza, Q: 2018)

‘...but the important question is where we will build this solar power station and how we will protect it? As any one knew, Gaza Strip is a region of war, in the last 12-year people of Gaza Strip live 3 destruction war, 2008, 2012 and 2014’ (Gaza, Q: 2018)

The IUG students clearly have a voice, but these comments cannot be categorised as attempts by the IUG students to ‘write back’, as the post-EAST student feedback lacked an audience. Given that the real-world impact of a course lasting just five weeks must at most be marginal, an important arbiter of its effectiveness may be measured in terms of the audience that it provides the Global South participants, and in these terms EAST lacked impact. The Gazan participants clearly want to communicate their frustration, but do so rarely in a public-facing manner, which suggests that they did feel obliged to disguise their identities (Risager, 2007). The students wanted and needed to “express their anger” (Nussbaum, 2013: 33), but were unable to do so. This raises a further question of concern; if many Gazan students felt unable to reveal their real identities, why did they choose to participate in EAST?

Ethical conundrum 2: Given a limited audience, why are IUG participants so eager to participate?

This question again reflects student-student power differentials, present in Global North-South interactions, which are significantly reduced in most intra-Global North interactions.

After the first two EAST projects (2015 and 2016), and drawing in part from the “partnership capital” (Koehn and Obamba, 2014: 25) engendered by EAST, the University of Glasgow presented two successive, and successful, bids for Erasmus + International Credit Mobility (ICM) funding in 2017. This appeared on the surface an example of ‘complementarity and

equity'; a project that had, for two years, benefited in the main the students based in the Global North would now contribute to students from the less privileged partner. But the following comment from an IUG student, at the end of the very first EAST project, already presaged a serious structural issue:

'Now what I really hope is to meet my new friends from Glasgow face to face :) I really wish if I could travel there' (Gaza F: 2015)

This comment from the teaching-team, minuted in the post-course annual monitoring review the following year, talks to a similar concern:

'we suspect some [IUG feedback] may be over-positive, due to Siege (any input is better than no input, or maybe because they hope for travel-opportunities beyond Gaza Strip)' (Glasgow AMR: 2016)

In other words, even before an Erasmus + ICM collaboration was mooted, course organisers in Glasgow were aware of a moral dilemma and of underlying power issues linked to involvement with students living in difficult circumstances; there was a fear that the IUG students were captive participants, joining EAST in the tiniest hope of a study-abroad experience, a means of escaping from war, economic hardship, and lack of opportunities.

Subsequent to the successful ICM bids, thirty Gazan students were in fact able to attend courses in Glasgow, for either six or 12 months, and to return to Gaza with credits towards their degrees. Applications to EAST among Gazan students immediately showed an almost threefold increase in 2018 (see *Table 1*). The end-of-course comments from IUG participants on EAST in 2018 (below) gave actual voice to the teachers' concerns as stated in the annual monitoring review:

'Due to the difficult conditions in which the residents of the Gaza Strip are going through the closure of the crossings, we have not been able to travel abroad.... I hope I have the opportunity to study Master in Britain' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

'This program encouraged me to study English very hard to obtain an international scholarship that allowing me to obtain a master's degree. I hope to get

a Master's degree at the University of Glasgow where great efforts are made to make it students unique in their fields' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

'In the end I hope to have another chance to participate in Glasgow University students' educational projects or get a chance to study at the University of Glasgow' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

'This program encouraged me to study English very hard to obtain an international scholarship that allowing me to obtain a master's degree' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

'Now I hope that I will have my postgraduate studies through this program in the UK' (Gaza, Q: 2018)

These comments shed light on what should be a much more seriously-considered ethical consideration in educational projects linking Global North and South institutions, particularly in areas of conflict, than is currently the case. Fassetta and Imperiale (2019: 9), in a recent literature review on indigenous engagement produced for the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, conclude that

....reflections on the role of funding allocations to individuals and/or groups within Indigenous communities (especially relevant in the case of international development projects) and about the power dynamics this may set in motion.....were conspicuously absent from all the literature we examined.

Though EAST has no grants for overseas study linked to it, the problem still remains, in that even the hope in Gaza of *possible* funding (or travel beyond Gaza) reflects a power dynamic which must perforce be an element when working with such differentials of privilege and opportunity. This doesn't mean that projects such as EAST should not take place. However, as Fassetta and Imperiale (ibid) state, the power dynamics need to be openly acknowledged, and expectations managed.

Ethical conundrum 3: Where does EAST sit within wider discourses?

The teachers on EAST were also aware of the ethics of working in a project such as EAST, i.e. a telecollaboration involving the Global South. In order to understand this awareness, some background to the particular position that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers occupy within the wider university is useful. Their position within the University of Glasgow mirrors the (precarious) situation that EAP teachers occupy at national level.

Ding and Bruce (2017: 195) note that the EAP practitioner is working, at social, generic and textual levels, on a broad remit of discursive competences that are challenging and stimulating, yet whose very breadth set them in an anomalous position within academia. Ding and Bruce outline growing professionalisation initiatives (driven by the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes), in an attempt to develop EAP from a support-service to an academic field in its own right. At the moment, they say, this move is incomplete, and pre-sessional courses / educators find themselves in a liminal position, with few opportunities for research and with less prestige than subject-lecturers.

This in some ways presents benefits. Teachers and directors of EAP courses, working as ‘almost-academics’, have greater freedom to adopt student-centred, participatory methods, including the telecollaborative work with unconventional partners described in this paper. While negotiating this position of liminality, they are also working with incoming graduates in the main from China and Saudi Arabia, who may be described as ‘almost-students’, in need of the language of academia, but also in need of a wider acculturation into university life. The ‘hybridity’ of the EAP teachers’ position (Bhabha, 1994) overlaps with the ‘becoming’ (Kramsch, 1993) of the students’ position. Helm et al. (2012: 107) argue that this affords a potentially very valuable ‘third space’ of shared understanding and in which conventions are open to challenge, a place which is “constantly constructed and re-constructed by participants who actively engage in dialogue and negotiate identities”, and that as such offers many possibilities for creativity and for dialogue.

But at the same time EAP teachers are well aware of the context within which they work, often with short-term contracts. They have a first-hand awareness of what Bourdieu (1986) has termed the social, cultural and symbolic capital, including but also going beyond economic capital, that actors bring to interactions and that can be converted from one form of capital to another, depending on the actor’s structural position and agentive power within a given field (their own, *vis-a-vis* the University, and by extension the IUG students’, *vis-a-vis*

their Glasgow-based partners). They tend too to be more aware than most of the power structures that underpin the strong international element to university work. The majority of EAP teachers work overseas through the year, returning to the UK only for the summer, and are well-positioned in their international focus to see through the ‘mission statements’ with which universities cloak their internationalisation-as-recruitment agenda in internationalisation-as-development garb (Avgousti, 2018).

A focus group was held with seven EAST teachers, in March 2020, guided loosely by the researcher on the basis of the opportunities for student-transformation and the underlying issues of power that inform this paper. The following post-EAST dialogue between teachers, was revealing of their informed position, and more specifically of the doubts and differences of opinion they held regarding their specific role and of their positioning within the wider academic system:

‘unfortunately (our students) don’t have access to the research in Palestine, i.e. how do those people see things? How can our students get reliable documents? So we do impose a Western perspective on Gaza-related issues. First we impose the Western perspective on Chinese students (via the pre-session course) and then we make them report the Western perspective on Gaza!’ (TF: Teacher 3)

(jokingly) ‘....so it’s doubly racist and colonialist!’ (TF: Teacher 2)

(disagreeing) ‘The Western teacher steps back, it ends up as a dialogue between two people whose first language is not English, so the power levels are a lot more even. They have to do this on their own, to collaborate. I mean we’re not over-looking them, making sure they’re doing this. So there is that free communication there’ (TF: Teacher 6)

Teacher 2 seems to be attempting a disarming role in the response given to Teacher 3’s position, but shows a realisation of a core concern; as Koehn and Obamba (2014: 78) put it, Global North actors can influence the direction that any student-student interactions will take. Teacher 3’s linking of the pre-session English language course with ‘colonialist’ narratives acknowledges the many (see e.g. Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998; Canagarajah and Selim, 2013; Nyamnjoh, 2016) who link courses such as the University of Glasgow’s to the wider

and, they argue, exploitative field of ELT which, they feel, perpetuates a status quo that is detrimental to the Global South. The position of English as an ‘imperialist’ language has, however, been contested (see e.g. Risager, 2007; Hirsch, 2020), and Teacher 6 demurs; she allows the students the agency to overcome this challenge, incidentally acknowledging the Freirean ‘teacher-as-facilitator’ role.

In the following exchange, teachers are ostensibly discussing organisational issues, i.e. the choice of the engineering problems under discussion, but again underlying issues relating to exclusion and power emerge:

‘It’s far better to have Gaza involved than not. The alternative would be isolation. But why can’t Palestinians think about solving Chinese problems?’ (TF: Teacher 2)

‘How about working together on UK problems? Though there could be a potential power issue in expecting Chinese students to criticise the host country’ (TF: Teacher 3)

A final comment, again from Teacher 3, gets to the very core of the dilemma presented to EAST organisers:

‘The main issue for me is lack of balance, in that the Gazans are just basically used, in a way, and they’re not getting much out of it’ (TF: Teacher 3)

Teacher 6 acknowledges the power carried by the English language, but here Teacher 3 seems to move beyond this; Kramsch (2002: 284) counsels a wariness of the very concept of ICC, as one that “can easily be high-jacked by a global ideology of ‘effective communication’ Anglo-Saxon style, which speaks an English discourse even as it expresses itself in many different languages”. Mignolo (in de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015: 23) approaches this more broadly still, talking about the very concept of ‘modernity’ as representing an ‘imperial project’, one that takes as a given seamless progress, industrialization, scientific reason, and secularisation; he argues that we need to acknowledge that these ‘bright shining concepts’ bring a concomitant ‘shadow’, one of spatiality (i.e. control of lands), ontoepistemic racism (i.e. elimination of difference) and a geopolitics of knowledge production (i.e. an epistemic violence).

The comments from the Gazan students on EAST certainly show the understandable salience of the spatial elements of life in the Gaza Strip, and the comments from the teachers also touch on these ontoepistemic and epistemic issues that Mignolo raises.

The colonial violences perpetrated in the past may be acknowledged by universities, as in the University of Glasgow's grant of £20,000,000 to the University of the West Indies (Karasz, 2019). However, Freire specifically warns about "generous gestures" (1996: 41), and de Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015) argue that current attempts to decolonise academia emphasise increased access (to knowledge, skills and cultural capital) for the Global South within the *existing* institutional framework, i.e. without calling into question the integrity of the system itself. For them, Mignolo's 'shadow of modernity' is being addressed, rather, by an 'expansion of modernity'. As such:

....the core business of the university as a credentializing institution for 'emancipated' socially-mobile subjects will remain intact. Radical-reform cannot, in practice, take account of ontological and meta-physical difference, as it cannot promote non-capitalist futurities without shooting itself in the foot (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015: 34).

The overall tenor of the teachers' comments concerning EAST remain very positive (many return each summer, specifically citing the value of the social justice agenda that it tries to offer). However, the comments in this section suggest that their liminal position within academia combined with their wider international (even internationalist) perspectives of UK higher education have brought some to pose the same ethical question as that raised by de Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015): when a university makes space for a project such as EAST, is the project hacking the system, or is it being hacked *by* the system?

Conclusions

With this question, we return to the 'conduct of conduct', as posited by Foucault and outlined in the introduction to this paper. By 'shouting over the walls' of French prisons, the *GIP* cast light on questions of power not only for prisoners, but also within wider French society, and

the telecollaborative megaphone has had, I feel, similarly reciprocal effects in Glasgow and in Gaza, and has helped make the question posed by de Oliveira et al. (2015) visible.

The comments from students reported in this paper have permitted not only a gauging of the impact of EAST on the pre-sessional course within which it is situated but, when combined with comments from the teachers on the course and with the author's field notes, they have allowed further reflection on the beliefs and practices of the institution, and even on the policies and ideologies within the field and the extent to which neo-liberal discourses influence the learning environment within UK universities. In summary, the initial 'shouting over the walls' into Gaza has, over the five-year course of EAST, taken on a fascinating (and unexpected) two-way direction, revealing a need to question beliefs and behaviours that academics and students, privileged enough to work and study in the Global North, take for granted. This unmasking of the way that power works is useful not in overturning institutional or (much less) global discourses - an impossibly large task for a small-scale project of this nature - but in allowing a Foucauldian understanding of how we as stakeholders have been 'put together' by discursive practices that influence higher education in the Global North, and (as Brunsell-Evans [2009] notes) to resist and challenge these if we choose to. After five years, EAST remains a project in frustratingly prototypical format, but the evidence offered here does suggest significant, and as yet untapped, potential for such resistance.

The first stated aim of this paper was to look for evidence for transformative change for students in the EAST Project. While EAST cannot be said to develop a true 'critical consciousness' - the Glasgow-based students cannot be described as 'oppressed' - the forefronting of a context via EAST is key and innovative, and meets a key Freirean precept. Many of the international students based in Glasgow would not otherwise have an opportunity to become interested in or sensitive to situations in the Global South, and for these students EAST is potentially transformative in that the telecollaborative project-work provides a strongly contextualised social justice agenda linked to an area of the world that confronts endemic conflict and injustice. Turning to the students in Gaza, Nussbaum's ten capabilities list many that appear intractable given the circumstances there and (once again) beyond the influence of students or course-organisers of small-scale educational projects such as EAST. But transformative change can in some instances be possible for the Gazan participants, too; as Wolfe and De-Shalit (in Nussbaum, 2013: 44) note, the "fertile

functionings” of certain capabilities may, in combination with others, offer unexpected opportunity for change across the broader capability spectrum. Taking Glasgow-based and Gazan students together, EAST certainly lends support to Bikowski’s contention (2011) that telecollaboration can be used to enhance students’ intercultural awareness *inductively*, without the need for overt ICC inputs; the inherent authenticity of the collaborative work, the intellectual challenge of the pluriliteracies approach, combined with the empathies - maybe even friendships - that can result, can engender commitment and a resulting potential for the breaking down of barriers. At the most fundamental level, examples presented in this article support Freire’s contention that speech-acts carry meaning: “Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” (Freire, 1996: 69); perhaps the current Covid-related restrictions - which have given those of us from the Global North cause to reconsider much of what we have hitherto taken for granted - may well increase participants’ predisposition to just such reflection. EAST certainly offers potential for transformative impact.

The second stated aim of this paper was to examine power-relationships evidenced by the EAST project. EAST demonstrates the risks inherent in working telecollaboratively with the Global South and the concomitant responsibilities that the power-advantages confer on Global North organisers. In the case of working with Gaza, these responsibilities are even more salient; not only are the overt power and wealth differentials very great, but course-organisers are also dealing with an (almost literally) captive audience. However, the examples offered here demonstrate that it would be an over-simplification to cast the Gazans simply as victims, and wrong to deny the Gazan students the agency that all students bring to participation, an agency that is mirrored at institutional level, too. Within her list of capabilities, Nussbaum (2013: 34) specifically notes that institutions play a key role in helping to develop and protect the affiliative function, and EAST has been able to demonstrate the value, at institutional level, of pre-sessional telecollaborative project-work with the Global South. Foucault highlighted the exclusionary effects of existing power structures, but in the context of higher education, before ‘subjugated knowledges’ and ‘disqualified discourses’ (Shor et al, 2017) can be confronted and positive impacts on students achieved, relationships at institutional level need to be crafted. Universities in the Global North have lists of ‘strategic partners’ with whom to prioritise international collaboration, and (by default) these will not include the overwhelming majority of universities from the Global South. Organising link-ups between the Global North and South

will only happen given slow and patient relationship-building, collaborating “long enough to build the institutional capacity and human capabilities needed for autonomous project leadership and positive societal outcomes” (Koehn and Obamba, 2014: 25). Massive power differentials exist between actors from the Global North and Global South, but only by setting up opportunities for contact can these power differentials be offered up for examination.

Pre-sessional courses can play a crucial, and as yet unrecognised, role in building these contacts. In terms of power, Global South institutions are in a weak position *vis a vis* their Global North partner, and so too are pre-sessional courses, occupying a peripheral position *vis a vis* the wider Global North university that they serve to feed. But the power of the squatter (Owens et al., 2013) is a fruitful analogy here; as a paradoxical result of this very *absence* of institutional power, an autonomy and space for experimentation is extended to pre-sessional courses, allowing the chance for innovative and meaningful initiatives – in this case, stimulating and mutually rewarding collaboration with the Global South, and a potentially life-enhancing exposure to other cultures and to areas where conflict, rather than privilege, is the default. EAST shows real potential for transformation, promoting the dialogue between students and institutions that, in Freire’s view (1996: 69) leads, through action and reflection, to “naming” - and thereby potentially changing - the world.

Limitations

This paper has used data that was initially collected for course-evaluation (rather than research) purposes and while other data-inputs are included, for reasons of project-to-project continuity, and given the surprising (and gratifying) growth in student-numbers, the multimodal nature of the interactions, and limited resources, it has needed to rely principally on student-feedback provided by end-of-course questionnaires. A second weakness of the study outlined in this paper has been the lack of attention paid to gender, and this is an area where more work will be very interesting - as a field, SET attracts a disproportionate number of male students, and at the same time, Gaza is an area where gender roles are quite strictly differentiated (and IUG itself is probably more traditional than other Palestinian universities in this respect), and finally, there is a great deal of pertinent research on the gendered nature of internet interactions. A fruitful third area to address would be a targeted exploration of

just what students understand by ‘culture’, and how (if at all) they differentiate it from language or national group. Plans are now underway for a study of the synchronous communication between a targeted number of groups, combined with the use of reflective journals, in an attempt to explore these three areas. Building on this research, and developing the affiliative and emotional impacts outlined here, may also open the way for longer-term collaboration, leading ideally to mutually beneficial *in-sessional* relationships, and the development of (currently bilateral) Glasgow-Gaza / Glasgow-Chile / Glasgow-Malawi links into a network, drawing mutually on the different skills-sets and range of experience that each participant can bring.

References

- Altheide, D.L. 2004. Ethnographic content analysis, in Lewis-Beck, M.S., Bryman, A., Liao, T.F. (eds), *The Sage encyclopedia of social science research methods*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, Ca
- Aouragh, M. 2001. Confined offline: Traversing online Palestinian mobility through the prism of the Internet. *Mobilities*, 6(3), 375-397
- Argenti, N. and Schramm, K. 2012. *Remembering Violence*. Berghahn: New York, NY
- Ashki, M. S. 2006. Islamic approaches and principles of dialogue. *Salam Institute for Peace and Justice*. Retrieved from <http://www.salaminstitute.org/ashki.pdf>. Accessed 10/6/19
- Atkins, K. 2009. ‘That’s just what I do’: Placing emotion in academic activism. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, 4–13
- Avgousti, M. I. 2018. Intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges: a systematic review, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 31:8, 819-853
- Bargel, T. 1998. Deutsche studierende und ausländer: Kontakte und haltungen [German and foreign students: Contacts and attitudes]. In A. Hosseinizadeh (Ed.), *Studium internationale: Handbuch zum ausländerstudium [Handbook on Foreign Students in German Higher Education]*, 195-222. Marburg: Schüren, Germany
- Ball, S. J. 2016. Subjectivity as a site of struggle: refusing neoliberalism?, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37:8, 1129-1146
- Barnett, R. 2007. *A will to learn: Being a student in an age of uncertainty*. Open University Press: Maidenhead, UK
- Beck, D. & Purcell, R. 2013. *International community organising: Taking power, making change*. Policy Press: Bristol, UK

- Beetham, H., & Sharpe, R. 2013. *Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age: Designing for 21st century learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge: New York, NY
- Belz, J. & Thorne, S. L. 2005. *Internet-mediated Intercultural Foreign Language Education* (Ausc Issues in Language Program Direction), Cengage: Boston, MA
- Benade, L. 2015. Teachers' Critical Reflective Practice in the Context of Twenty-first Century Learning, *Open Review of Educational Research*, 2(1), 42-54
- Bhabha, H. K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge: London, UK
- Bikowski, D. 2011. Review of 'Online Intercultural Exchange: An Introduction for Foreign Language Teachers'. *Language Learning and Technology*, 15(1), 24-28.
- Boden, R. & Epstein, D. 2006. Managing the research imagination? Globalisation and research in higher education, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 4(2), 223-236
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. The Forms of Capital. In Szeman, I. & Kaposy, T. (eds) *Cultural theory: An anthology*. Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, UK
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. University of Chicago Press, IL
- Brunskell-Evans, H. 2009. When the shift hits the critical fan: A Foucauldian analysis, *Compass: Journal of learning and teaching*, 1(1)
- Brutt-Griffler, J. 2002. *World English: a study of its development*. Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK
- Bryman, A. 2008. *Social Research Methods*, OUP: Oxford, UK
- Byram, M. 1997. *Teaching and assessing intercultural competence*. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, UK
- Canagarajah, S. 2002. Resisting linguistic imperialism in English. *ELT Journal* 56(3):330-333
- Canagarajah, S. and Selim, B.S. 2013. Linguistic imperialism. In *The Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, 388-400. Routledge: London, UK
- Cenoz, J., Genesee, F. & Gorter, D. 2014. A critical analysis of CLIL: Taking stock and looking forward, *Applied Linguistics*, 35/3, 243-262
- Coleman, J. 2015. Social circles during residence abroad: What students do, and who with, in Mitchell, R., Tracy-Ventura, N. & McManus, K. (eds.), *Social interaction, identity and Language learning during residence abroad*, European Second Language Association: Essex, UK
- Coyle, D. 2015. Strengthening integrated learning: Towards a new era for pluriliteracies and intercultural learning. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*, 8(2), 84-103

- Crosbie, V. 2014. Capabilities for Intercultural dialogue. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 91-107
- Dalton-Puffer, C., Llinares, A., Lorenzo, F., & Nikula, T. 2014. You can stand under my umbrella: Immersion, CLIL and bilingual education. A response to Cenoz, Genesee & Gorter. *Applied Linguistics*, 35, 213–218
- Davies, B. 2006. Subjectification: The Relevance of Butler's Analysis for Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 27 (4): 425–438
- de Nooy, J. 2006. Border Patrol in the Borderless World: Negotiating Intercultural Internet Discussion. *Language, Society and Culture*. 1 (19) 1-8
- de Oliveira Andreotti, V., Stein, S., Cash, A. & Hunt, D. 2015. Mapping interpretations of decolonization in the context of higher education. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 4, No. 1, 2015, 21-40
- Ding, A. and Bruce, I. 2017. *The English for Academic Purposes Practitioner: Operating on the Edge of Academia*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK
- Dix, M. 2016. The Cognitive Spectrum of Transformative Learning. *Journal of Transformative Learning*, 14(2), 139-162
- Downey, G.L., Lucena, J.C., Moskal, B.M., Parkhurst, R., Bigley, T., Hays, C., Jesiek, B.K., Kelly, L., Miller, J., Ruff, S., Lehr, J.L., & Nichols-Belo, A. 2006. The Globally Competent Engineer: Working effectively with people who define problems differently. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 95(2), 107-122
- Elias, J. L. & Merriam, S. B. 1980. *Philosophical foundations of adult education*, Krieger: Malabar, FL
- Engineers without borders annual report. 2018. Retrieved from www.ewb-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/EWB-UK_Annual-Review_2017.pdf. Accessed 10/6/19
- Fassetta, G., Imperiale, M.G., Frimberger, K., Attia, M., & Al-Masri, N. 2017. Online Teacher Training in a Context of Forced Immobility: The Case of Gaza, Palestine. *European Education*, 49: 133–150, 2017
- Fassetta, G., Imperiale, M.G. 2019. *Indigenous engagement, research partnerships, and knowledge mobilisation*, <https://www.ukri.org/news/esrc-ahrc-gcrf-indigenous-engagement-programme/>. UK Research & Innovation. Accessed 27/3/20
- Fassetta, G., Imperiale, M.G., Aldegheri, E. & Al-Masri, N. 2020. The role of stories in the design of an online language course: ethical considerations on a cross-border collaboration between the UK and the Gaza Strip. *Language and Intercultural Communication* (early online publication: doi: 10.1080/14708477.2020.1722145).

- Fazackerly, A. 2019. The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jun/11/universities-condemn-catastrophic-plan-link-fees-graduate-pay-augar> Accessed 2/3/2020
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage Books: New York
- Foucault, M. 1994a. 'Governmentality', in Faubion, J. [ed], *Michel Foucault: Power: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin: London, pp 201-222
- Foucault, M. 1994b. 'The Subject and Power', in Faubion, J. [ed], *Michel Foucault: Power: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin: London, pp 326-348
- Foucault, M. 1994c. 'Truth and Power', in Faubion, J. [ed], *Michel Foucault: Power: The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin: London, pp 111-133
- Freire, P. 1996. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Penguin: London, UK
- Freire, P. 1998. *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*, Rowman & Littlefield, OUP: Oxford, UK
- Giroux, H. 2002. Neo-liberalism, corporate culture and the promise of Higher Education: The university as a democratic public sphere. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4), 425-463
- Giroux, H. A. 2010. 'Rethinking Education as the Practice of Freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of critical pedagogy', in *Policy Futures in Education*, 8(6): 715-721
- Goris, J., Denessen, E. & Verhoeven, L. 2019. The contribution of CLIL to learners' international orientation and EFL confidence, *The Language Learning Journal*, 47:2, 246-256
- Guariento, B. & Morley, J. 2001. Text and task authenticity in the EFL classroom. *ELT Journal*, 55(4), 347-353
- Gurin, P. 1999. The compelling need for diversity in education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 32(2), 36-62, University of Michigan Press: Mi
- Guth, S. & Helm, F. 2011. *Developing multiliteracies in ELT through telecollaboration*, Peter Lang: Bern, Switzerland
- Hall, S. & du Gay, P. 2011. *Questions of cultural identity*, Sage: Thousand Oaks, Ca
- Hammond, K. 2012. Lifelong learning in Palestine. *Holy Land Studies*, 11/1, 79-85
- Hekman, S. 2018. Feminist Methodology. In Outhwaite, W. & Turner, S.P. (eds) *The Sage handbook of social science methodology*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, Ca
- Helm, F. 2015. The practices and challenges of telecollaboration in higher education in Europe. *Language Learning and Technology*, 19(2), 197-217

- Herrera, L. 1992. Scenes of schooling: Inside a girls' school in Cairo, *Cairo papers in Social Science* 15, Monograph 1
- Holliday, A. 2007. *Doing and writing qualitative research (second edition)*, Sage: London, UK
- Imperiale, M. G. 2017. A capability approach to language education in the Gaza Strip: 'To plant hope in a land of despair'. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 5(1), 37-58
- Imperiale, M. G., Phipps, A., Al-Masri, N. & Fassetta, G. 2017. Pedagogies of hope and resistance: English language education in the context of the Gaza Strip, Palestine. In: Erling, E. J. (ed.) *English Across the Fracture Lines*. British Council: London, 31-38.
- Jeffery, R. 2018. Emotions and international political theory. In: Brown, C. & Eckersley, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory*. OUP, Oxford, UK
- Hirsch, A. 2020. Africa's colonisation of the English language continues apace. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/29/africa-colonisation-english-language-oxford-dictionary-nigerian>. Accessed 1/3/2020
- Karasz, P. 2019. *Glasgow University Pledges Millions for 'Reparative Justice' for Slavery Ties* <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/24/world/europe/university-of-glasgow-slavery-reparations.html>. Accessed 1/3/20.
- Katehi, L. & Ross, M. 2007. Technology and Culture: Exploring the creative instinct through cultural interpretation. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 96(2), 89-90
- Koehn, P.H. & Obamba, M.O. 2014. *The transnationally partnered university: Insights from research and sustainable development collaborations in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK
- Kramsch, C. 1994. *Context and culture in language teaching*. OUP: Oxford, UK
- Kramsch, C. 2002. In search of the intercultural. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 6, 275-285
- Kramsch, C. 2013. Culture in foreign language teaching. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 1(1), 57-78
- Kumaravadivelu, B. 2008. *Cultural globalisation and language education*, Yale University Press: Newhaven, CT
- Lamy, M. & Goodfellow, R. 2010. Telecollaboration and Learning 2.0. In: Guth, Sarah and Helm, Francesca eds. *Telecollaboration 2.0: language, literacies and intercultural learning in the 21st century*. Telecollaboration in Education, 1. Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 107-138
- Lorey, I. 2015. *State of insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, Verso: London, UK
- Marie, M., Hannigan, B. & Jones, A. 2018. Social ecology of resilience and 'Sumud' of Palestinians, *Health*, Vol. 22 (1), 20-35

- Mezirow, J. 2011. *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education*. Wiley: Hoboken, NJ
- Morrissey, J. 2015. Regimes of performance: practices of the normalised self in the neoliberal university, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36:4, 614-634
- Naples, N. A. 1998. *Community activism and feminist politics: Organizing across race, class and gender*: Routledge, NY
- Nyamnjoh, F.B. 2016. *Rhodes must fall: Nibbling at resilient colonialism in South Africa*. Langaa research and publishing common initiative group: Bamenda, Cameroon
- Nussbaum, M. 2013. *Creating capabilities*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2019. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm> Accessed 1/3/2020
- O'Dowd, R. 2011. *Intercultural communicative competence through telecollaboration*, in Jackson, J. (ed) *Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication*. Routledge: Abingdon, UK
- O'Dowd, R. 2013. Telecollaborative networks in university higher education: Overcoming barriers to integration. *Internet and Higher Education*, 18, 47-53
- O'Dowd, R. 2018. *UNicollaboration*, *Journal of Virtual Exchange*, 1, pp 1 – 23
- O'Dowd, R., & O'Rourke, B. 2019. New developments in virtual exchange for foreign language education. *Language Learning & Technology*, 23(3), 1–7
- Otten, M. 2003. Intercultural Learning and Diversity. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(1), 12-26
- Owens, L., Katzeff, A., Lorenzi, E. & Baptiste, C. 2013. At home in the movement: Constructing an oppositional identity through activist travel across European squats. In Flesher Fominaya, C. & Cox, L. (eds) *Understanding European movements: New social movements, global justice struggles, anti-austerity protest*. Routledge: Abingdon, UK
- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2018. Retrieved from pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&itemID=3183. Accessed 10/6/19
- Perez-Cañado, M. 2012. CLIL research in Europe: past, present, and future, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15:3, 315-341
- Pennycook, A. 1998. *English and the discourses of colonialism*, Routledge: London, UK
- Peters, M.A. & Besley, T.A.C. 2014 Social Exclusion/Inclusion: Foucault's analytics of exclusion, the political ecology of social inclusion and the legitimation of inclusive education, *Open Review of Educational Research*, 1:1, 99-115

- Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism*, OUP: Oxford, UK
- Phipps, A. 2014. 'They are bombing now': 'Intercultural Dialogue' in times of conflict, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 108-124
- Plutino, A., Borthwick, K., & Corradini, E. (eds). 2019. New educational landscapes: innovative perspectives in language learning and technology. *Research-publishing.net*
- Risager, K. 2007. *Language and Culture Pedagogy: From a National to a Transnational Paradigm*. Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK
- Roberts, C., Byram, M., Barro, A., Jordan, S., & Street, B. 2001. *Language learners as ethnographers*. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, UK
- Rolinska, A. & Guariento, B. 2017. Constructive Feedback Course.
<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/project-media/constructive-feedback-course/>
University of Glasgow. Accessed 27/3/20
- Rolinska, A., Guariento, B. & Al-Masri, N. 2018. English for Specific Academic Purposes: Student partnerships across borders, *ELT Research Papers 18/01*, British Council: London, UK
- Säid, E. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf: New York, NY
- Schaeffer, D., Panchal, J.H., Thames, J.L., Haroon, S., & Mistree, F. 2012. Educating engineers for the near tomorrow. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 28(2), 381-396
- Schweisfurth, M. & Gu, Q. 2009. Exploring the experiences of international students in UK higher education: possibilities and limits of interculturality in university life. *Intercultural Education*, 20(5), 463-473
- Shor, I., Matusov, E., Marjanovic-Shane, A. & Cresswell, J. 2017. Dialogic & Critical Pedagogies: An Interview with Ira Shor. *Dialogic Pedagogy*, 5.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1147791.pdf> Accessed 2/3/2020
- Soliya Program. Retrieved from <https://www.soliya.net/programs/connect-program>. Accessed 10/6/19
- Starke-Meyerring, D. & Wilson, M. 2008. *Designing globally networked learning environments*, Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands
- Tawil-Souri, H. 2015. Between Digital Flows and Territorial Borders: ICTs in the Palestine-Israel-EU Matrix. In R. A. Del Sarto (ed.) *Fragmented Borders, Interdependence and External Relations*, 107-126, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, UK
- Times Higher Education supplement. 2020. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2020/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats Accessed 1/3/2020
- The Guardian. 2018. *Even the firehoses leak: how Gaza deals with urban destruction – video*

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/video/2018/apr/05/inside-gaza-how-a-city-under-siege-prepares-for-war-video> Accessed 1/3/20

Torres, C. A. 2011. Public universities and the neoliberal common sense: seven iconoclastic theses, *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 21:3, 177-197

Tuhiwai Smith, L. 2012. *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. Zed books: London, UK

Turula, A., Kurek, M., & Lewis, T. (eds). 2019. Telecollaboration and virtual exchange across disciplines: in service of social inclusion and global citizenship. *Research-publishing.net*: Voillans, France. Accessed 27/3/20

UK Council for International Student Affairs. 2018. <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Research--Policy/Statistics/International-student-statistics-UK-higher-education>. Accessed 2/3/20

United Nations Development Program. 2019. *Human Development Report*. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>. Accessed 27/3/20

van der Wende, M. 2017. Reframing Global Engagement. *International Higher Education*, 90, 10-12

Ware, P.D. & Kramsch, C. 2005. Toward an Intercultural Stance: Teaching German and English through Telecollaboration, *Modern Language Journal*, 89:2, 190-205

Wells, N., Forsdick, C., Bradley, J., Burdett, C., Burns, J., Demossier, M., de Zárata, M.H., Huc-Hepher, S., Jordan, S., Pitman, T. and Wall, G. 2019. Ethnography and Modern Languages. *Modern Languages Open*, 1(01)

Willis, J.W. & Edwards, C. (eds). 2014. *Action research: Models, methods and examples*. IAP: Charlotte, NC

Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G. & Cassidy, K. 2019. *Bordering*. Polity Press: Cambridge, UK

Knowledge Exchange Output 8: Guariento, B., Al Masri, N., Abuzayed, A., Rolinska, A. & Mandala, W. 2020. Global North/South Telecollaboration, 1/7/20. British Council English Language Teaching Webinar: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/global-north-south-project-based-learning-student-student-telecollaboration-language>

Dr John Morley | Director, University-wide Language Programmes | University Language Centre
School of Arts, Languages and Cultures | The University of Manchester | Oxford Road, Manchester
M13 9PL. Tel: 0161 275 3428 | john.morley@manchester.ac.uk

Paper 3:

Esther Daborn <estherdaborn@gmail.com>

Sat 15/06, 14:13

Dear Bill

Regarding your email about our publication

Daborn, E. & Guariento, B. (2002) 'How can we reach them?' In *Supporting student learning*, Crosling, G. & Webb, G. (eds), Kogan Page, London, ISBN 9780749435356 (50%)

I'm certainly happy to support a 50:50 split in our respective contributions to that chapter.

All the best with you PhD

Regards

Esther

Papers 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9:

From: Anna Rolinska

Sent: 19 June 2019 07:18

To: William Guariento <William.Guariento@glasgow.ac.uk>

Subject: here you go

To whom it may concern,

I confirm that my percentage authorship follows each of the articles listed below, in brackets:

- Guariento, B., Al-Masri, N. & Rolinska, A. (2016) Investigating EAST (A Scotland-Gaza English for Academic Study Telecollaboration between SET Students). *American Society for Engineering Education 123rd Annual Conference Proceedings*, New Orleans, USA (45%)
- Guariento, B. and Rolinska, A. (2016) A UK-Palestine online EAP collaboration for science graduates. *International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language Conference Proceedings*, Birmingham, UK, ISBN 9781901095890 (50%)
- Rolinska, A., Guariento, B. & Al-Masri, N. (2017) English for Specific Academic Purposes Student Partnerships Across Borders. *British Council English Language Teaching Research Paper*. ISBN 978-0-86355-856-6 (45%)
- Rolinska, A. & Guariento, B. (2017) Constructive Feedback Course.
<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com/project-media/constructive-feedback-course/>
University of Glasgow (50%)

- Guariento, B., Rolinska, A. & Al-Masri, N. (2018) Constructive content-based feedback in EAP contexts, *Higher Education Research & Development*, Volume 37, Issue 3, pages 514 – 532 (45%)
- Rolinska, A., Guariento, B. Abouda, G. & Nakprada, O. (2019) “Really Talking”: from Active to Transformative Learning in distributed environments and under highly pressured conditions, in “*Can you hear me?*” *Engaging multilingually in online international academic collaborations when borders are impassable*. Phipps, A., Al-Masri, N. & Fassetta, G. (eds) Bristol: Multilingual Matters, in press (45%)

Anna Rolińska

University Lecturer (English for Academic Study)

English for Academic Study
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens
Glasgow, G12 8RS

University of Glasgow
Charity Number SC004401

Email: anna.rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk

Web profile: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/mlc/staff/annarolinska/>

Papers 4, 6 & 8:

Nazmi Al-Masri <nmasri@iugaza.edu.ps>

Thu 20/06, 20:00

To whom it may concern:

Regarding the following three publications, I confirm that I provided 10% authorship for each:

- Guariento, B., Al-Masri, N. & Rolinska, A. (2016) Investigating EAST (A Scotland-Gaza English for Academic Study Telecollaboration between SET Students). *American Society for Engineering Education 123rd Annual Conference Proceedings*, New Orleans, USA
- Rolinska, A., Guariento, B. & Al-Masri, N. (2017) English for Specific Academic Purposes Student Partnerships Across Borders. *British Council English Language Teaching Research Paper*. ISBN 978-0-86355-856-6
- Guariento, B., Rolinska, A. & Al-Masri, N. (2018) Constructive content-based feedback in EAP contexts, *Higher Education Research & Development*, Volume 37, Issue 3, pages 514 – 532

Paper 9:

On Sun, Mar 31, 2019 at 4:07 PM Anna Rolinska <Anna.Rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear Ghadeer and Ongkarn,

Thanks again for agreeing to contribute your case study to the book chapter Bill and I have written. As said before, to recognise your effort we would like to include both of you as co-authors, with each of your contributions being an equivalent of 5% of authorship (when publishing articles authors have to disclose how much they have contributed). We hope this is a fair estimate - please let us know if you agree.

Attached is the final draft of the chapter. Please have a look and let us know if you want to make any amendments. Can you please get back to us within the next 7 days?

Thanks and looking forward to hearing from you.

Best

Anna and Bill

----- Original message -----

From: Ongkarn Nakprada <ongwrc@hotmail.com>

Date: 01/04/2019 17:03 (GMT+00:00)

To: Anna Rolinska <Anna.Rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk>

Cc: William Guariento <William.Guariento@glasgow.ac.uk>

Subject: RE: Co-authoring a book chapter

Dear Anna and Bill,

I am totally agree with your estimate for my contribution, I hope my work will have some benefits. I have read some part of your work, it seem to be a great work and interesting one. Please let me know when it was published.

Thank you for your great work.

Best wishes,

Ongkarn

Ghadeer Abo uda <dewet.sends@gmail.com>

Tue 25/06, 09:52

To whom it may concern:

Regarding the following publication, I confirm that I contributed 5% authorship to the following paper:

Rolinska, A., Guariento, B., Abouda, G. & Nakprada, O. (2019) "Really Talking": from Active to Transformative Learning in distributed environments and under highly pressured conditions, in "Can you hear me?" Engaging multilingually in online international academic collaborations when borders are impassable. Phipps, A., Al-Masri, N. & Fassetta, F. (Eds) Bristol: Multilingual Matters, in press

Thanks,
Ghadeer

Appendix 3 – Data-collection instruments:

Phase	Instrument	Relevant paper / Knowledge Exchange Output
Global South (Eritrea)	Reflexive journal (informed Masters dissertation)	Paper 1
Global North (UK)	Emergent Practice	Papers 2 & 3
Global North-South: Mixed methods analyses (UK & Gaza)	End-of-course surveys: combining closed questions / rankings and open questions	Papers 4, 5, 6
Global North-South: Qualitative analyses (UK & Gaza)	End-of-course surveys: open questions	Papers 7, 8, 10, KEO 7
“	Ethnography (thick description)	Paper 9
“	Students’ Facebook exchanges	KEO 7
“	Teachers’ focus group / Annual monitoring review meetings	KEO 7
“	Field Notes	KEO 7

Survey

The following is the survey form used from EAST 1 through EAST 5 (this is the final version, updated to reference new partners from Chile and Malawi):

Link to online form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1CTZwbFVQ5Hs_WY2OyNDizj25JO1ExVYMgCJIS6-gT_U/edit

Form content:

<p style="text-align: center;">EAST PROJECT SURVEY</p> <p>This survey aims to help evaluate the EAST 2019 Project, a collaborative research and writing project carried out with pre-sessional engineering students at the University of Glasgow and engineering students at one of the four partner institutions (IUG, MUST, INACAP, PUCV).</p> <p>The survey is for the student participants from UoG.</p>

The survey can take around 30 minutes. Some of the answers are obligatory and others are optional; however, we hope you will provide answers to all the questions. Your feedback is welcome as we would like to improve the project in the future.

All responses are voluntary and anonymous (unless you agree to reveal your name in the last question - in that case the responses will be anonymised).

By filling in this survey, you give consent to the data being used for the purposes of future publications, both online and offline.

The Project co-ordinators would like to thank all the students for their participation and collaboration.

(* denotes a required answer)

PERSONAL INFORMATION

What is your gender? *

☐ Female

☐ Male

What is your nationality? *

What is your age range? *

☐ Less than 20

☐ 20 - 24

☐ 25 - 29

☐ 30 - 34

☐ 35 - 39

☐ 40 and more

Are you ... *

☐ an undergraduate student at UoG?

☐ a postgraduate student at UoG?

What is your discipline (your prospective UoG programme)? *

Which country was your EAST partner based in?

☐ Gaza

☐ Malawi

☐ Chile

BEFORE THE PROJECT

Before participating in the EAST project did you have any experience with collaborating with others based in the same place (face-to-face)? *

Choose the answer that best reflects your experience.

- ☐ Yes, a lot.
- ☐ Yes, a little
- ☐ None

Please give more detail regarding your collaboration with others.

Before participating in the EAST project did you have any experience with collaborating with others at a distance (online)? *

Choose the answer that best reflects your experience.

- ☐ Yes, a lot.
- ☐ Yes, a little
- ☐ None.

Please give more detail regarding your collaboration with others at a distance.

Before participating in the EAST project did you have any experience with using technology to facilitate a group project? *

Choose the answer that best reflects your experience.

- ☐ Yes, a lot.
- ☐ Yes, a little
- ☐ None.

Please give more detail regarding your use of technology to facilitate a group project.

Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with communicating in English with others via technologies? *

- ☐ Very comfortable, no problems at all.
- ☐ Quite comfortable.
- ☐ Rather uncomfortable.

Please give more detail regarding your communication in English via technologies.

Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with team working? *

Very comfortable, no problems at all.

- ☐ Quite comfortable.
- ☐ Rather uncomfortable.

Please give more detail regarding your experience in team working.

Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with problem solving? *

Very comfortable, no problems at all.

- ☐ Quite comfortable.
- ☐ Rather uncomfortable.

Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with digital literacies (communicating and working online rather than using hardware and/or software)? *

- ☐ Very comfortable, no problems at all.
- ☐ Quite comfortable.
- ☐ Rather uncomfortable.

Please give more detail regarding your digital literacies.

Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with cross-cultural awareness? *

- ☐ Very comfortable, no problems at all.
- ☐ Quite comfortable.
- ☐ Rather uncomfortable.

Please give more detail regarding your cross-cultural awareness. You can also say how did you understand cross-cultural awareness?

Before the EAST project, how comfortable were you with your knowledge of the partner country and its situation?

- ☐ Very comfortable, no problems at all.
- ☐ Quite comfortable.
- ☐ Rather uncomfortable.

Before the EAST project, what did you think would be the greatest challenge for you?

In your own words, how would you describe your interaction and collaboration with the partners from the other institution? *

You can comment on frequency, length, extent of communication, type of interaction and collaboration, etc. (Please note there is a separate question about the technologies used for communication and collaboration).

What technologies have you used to interact with each other? *

You can choose more than one option.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Whatsapp
- ☐ Other:

Can you give details of your use of technology to support the collaboration?

You can comment on which technology you used most often, which was the most useful, why you chose to use a particular technology, etc. Tell us also whether you communicated in real time (e.g. voice or video chat) or in a delayed manner (e.g. text messenger).

What challenges did you encounter when working together online and how did you try to overcome them?

What could have been done to support the collaboration?

Evaluate the general usefulness of the project for your general academic development. *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

To what extent was the project useful in developing your communication skills? *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer? Think of an example that would illustrate the development of your communication skills?

To what extent was the project useful in developing your team working skills? *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer? Think of an example that would illustrate the development of your team working skills?

To what extent was the project useful in developing your problem solving skills? *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer? Think of an example that would illustrate the development of your problem solving skills?

To what extent was the project useful in developing your digital literacies (understood as an ability to communicate/work online rather than familiarity with hardware or software)? *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer? Think of an example that would illustrate the development of your digital literacies?

To what extent was the project useful in developing your cross-cultural awareness? *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer? Think of an example that would illustrate the development of your cross-cultural awareness?

To what extent was the project useful in developing your knowledge of real-life issues?

THIS QUESTION IS FOR UoG STUDENTS ONLY

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer? Think of an example that would illustrate the development of your knowledge of real-life issues?

How would you evaluate participation in the project in relation to developing specialist knowledge? *

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

How would you evaluate participation in the project in relation to producing the subject specific essay?

THIS QUESTION IS FOR UoG STUDENTS ONLY

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer?

How would you evaluate participation in the project in relation to preparing and delivering the final presentation

THIS QUESTION IS FOR UoG STUDENTS ONLY

- ☐ Very useful.
- ☐ Quite useful.
- ☐ A little useful.
- ☐ Not useful.

Can you develop your answer?

What was the greatest thing about participating in the project? *

What was the most challenging thing about participating in the project? *

What definitely needs to be improved/changed for the project to work better next time? *

Would you recommend participating in such a project to your friend? Why? *

The majority of the students on the pre-sessional course are Mandarin speakers. How do you evaluate the EAST Project in terms of increasing linguistic diversity?

When working on the project, what language/es did you use? Were there particular situations in which you used one language over the other? Give examples.

Apart from linguistic diversity, the project also facilitated cultural diversity. How do you evaluate the project in terms of raising your cultural awareness? Can you give examples of how you developed it?

Did you make real time contact when you heard each other's voices and saw each other's faces? When during the project? How often? How was that important for your project work?

When communicating with your partner, did you ever discuss topics other than the topics directly related to the Project? If yes, what topics and how did that make you feel? If not, why not?

How do you evaluate the project in terms of increasing your knowledge of global issues such as climate change/crisis, poverty, etc? What global issues did you learn about?

Your partner lives and works in completely different circumstances, often much more disadvantaged than yours. To what extent has the project affected your capacity for compassion and social justice? Develop your answer. If you feel it hasn't affected you in any way, can you speculate why not?

Has the project changed you in any way as a person, for example in the ways in which you think or act? Develop your answer

Would you like to tell us more by participating in an interview or a focus group? If yes, please share your email address with us and we will get in touch with you.

Appendix 4 – Sample information sheets / consent forms:

2015

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 'EAST' TELECOLLABORATION PROJECT for students from the Islamic University of Gaza and the University of Glasgow

Dear Students,

My name is Bill Guariento and together with my colleague, Anna Rolinska, we are planning to deliver a collaborative research and writing project between the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students on a pre-sessional course at the University of Glasgow English for Academic Study and Science and Engineering students at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), Palestine.

Traditionally, our students have to research, and produce a written Subject Specific Essay (SSE) as well as present and accept audience questions on a problem-based scenario in the last week of a five-week course in August. The essay and the presentation should follow an SPRE format (Situation / Problem / Responses / Evaluation). In the past, this has been an individual project, but we feel that there is scope for the project to further develop the team-working skills that students need when they join their courses in September. The aim, therefore, is for our students to work in groups of 3 this year, sharing the research and final presentations, but each producing an individual written project.

In order to enrich the project, make it more authentic and introduce a further element of collaboration as well as intercultural awareness, we would like each STEM group from the University of Glasgow to twin with a pair of students within the Engineering department at IUG. The UIG partners would provide an initial problem for our students to research as well as ongoing support and feedback. This would provide the SSE with a real-world application which it has lacked to date.

The project will hopefully provide a meaningful learning experience for the students from both institutions. There will be ongoing collaboration between students in Scotland and Palestine over the course of the five weeks, allowing language practice, but also developing transferable skills such as team-working, project participation, problem-solving, intercultural awareness, and digital literacies. In week 5, there will be a presentation of the SSE which will take place via video-link with Gaza, allowing students in Palestine to form part of the audience.

We are hoping that the initiative will be a success for the students at the University of Glasgow, and that it will also help to overcome the current isolation of the students in Gaza, and to improve their own employment prospects by developing the skills listed in the previous paragraph.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

In order to participate in the project you need to be enthusiastic about acquiring and sharing knowledge and skills across borders by means of technologies. You need to be able to communicate in English in speaking and writing and you need to be willing to dedicate some time to the project during online sessions in real time (most likely via Skype) as well as via asynchronous forums (most likely via a closed Facebook group). Please see the proposed timetable below to get a better sense of the time requirement. Any necessary training in using the technologies will be provided.

In return you will have the opportunity to practise your English, develop team-working and problem-solving skills as well as cultural awareness. You will be provided with guidance in developing skills in providing constructive criticism and you are likely to enhance digital literacies. At the end of the project you will receive a certificate of participation and your name will be featured on the project website.

PROPOSED TIMETABLE

Time	Action (UoG)	Action (IUG)
Tuesday 30th June	UoG sends IUG a list of anticipated students and their fields	IUG sends UoG an introductory video about IUG (with links to Gaza issues) to be posted on UoG moodle
Wednesday 8th July		IUG selects participants (maximum 26)
Monday 13th July 10 a.m. UK time	UoG & IUG hold joint online introductory session for IUG students to familiarise them with the project	
End of July	UoG English for Academic Study gives IUG students online input on how to give constructive criticism, and a generic task to complete	IUG sends UoG a written list of potential problems for our students to research (maybe 2 or 3 problems per group, to allow UoG students some flexibility in choice)
Block C week 1	UoG students are introduced to the SPRE project. Via skype, UoG students learn about their field-specific problem from IUG students	IUG students send UoG staff their generic constructive criticism task Via skype, IUG students explain their field-specific problem to UoG students
Block C week 2	UoG students research the field-specific problem they have chosen UoG staff provide f/b on IUG students' generic constructive criticism task	

Block C week 3	Via skype, UoG students give IUG students an oral overview of their (3?) responses	IUG students provide an oral evaluation of these responses
Block C week 4	UoG students write up the evaluation section, on the basis of week 3's IUG constructive criticism, and on further research	
Block C week 5, Monday 31st August	UoG students hand in their completed Subject Specific Essays to English for Academic Study staff, then present their SSEs (14 approx. groups of 3, x 15 minutes per group) via videoconference, taking questions from their peers in Glasgow and at IUG.	
Block C week 5, midweek	UoG staff return marked subject-specific essays	IUG students prepare brief video-clips on elements of day-to-day life in Gaza related to the SSEs
Block C week 5, final day	UoG students view brief video clips sent (via Youtube or Dropbox?) by their IUG partners that illustrate elements of day-to-day life in Gaza related to the SSEs	
	IUG and UoG students write a reflection on the experience	
	Videoconference party!	

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can help

- by agreeing to participate in the project as outlined in this document and then by making time to participate actively in the collaboration with the students from UoG;

- by giving consent to use of data from the online spaces like Facebook that are going to be used to support the communication between the students from the two universities;
- by completing a short survey at the end of the project to share your feedback on the usefulness of the project.

If you give consent to use of any of the data above, all the identifying information, that is your name, will be removed. In case of videos, we can ensure that faces are blurred so that you cannot be recognised.

The information will be used to evaluate the project but also to share the experience with a wider academic community through journal articles, conference presentations as well as the project website.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your participation in the project, by allowing us to use data from your participation, is completely voluntary. You will receive a consent form to sign to confirm your voluntary participation. You can withdraw your permission for us to use your data at any point and with or without providing an explanation. You have the right to ask any questions about the study, its perceived benefits and risks. Before your name is published on the website, you will be asked for your permission. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please ask the project co-ordinator, either in person or by email (see the contact details below).

BENEFITS AND RISKS

We have already outlined the benefits of this initiative: there are no known risks for you.

Participation in it or lack of it will not affect in any way the results of the course you are undertaking at the moment or any future courses. Once the website has been produced, you will be sent a link to it and invited to leave feedback on its potential usefulness to your preparations for study at the University of Glasgow.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

As said before, all the identifying information from the online communication will be removed.

When referring to the participants, neutral forms of address will be used.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this project please talk to the project co-ordinator in person or via e-mail:

Bill Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

Thanks a lot for considering participation in our project.

2016

PARTICIPATION IN THE EAST PROJECT INVITATION FOR STUDENTS

Dear Student,

My name is Anna Rolinska and together with my colleague, Bill Guariento, we are planning to develop a writing and research collaboration between Block C Science, Engineering and Technology, and Biomedical pre-sessional (PS) students at English for Academic Study (EAS) at the University of Glasgow (UoG), and students studying engineering disciplines and medical sciences at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG).

We both work at EAS and regularly work with international students wishing to study on post-graduate courses or already studying on such courses. Having supported students for a number of years, we think we have become aware of the unique needs such students have when it comes to learning how to conduct literature research and effectively summarise the findings in writing via an academic report and in speaking via an academic presentation. We are also conscious of the fact that the University aims at supporting students in both academic and professional development. The UoG Graduate Attributes Matrix (http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183776_en.pdf) clearly outlines the various attributes that the student is expected to develop throughout their studies at the University, for instance team-working skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, digital literacies and cross-cultural awareness. Our initiative intends to meet those needs.

On the five-week subject-specific pre-sessional (PS) course, the students have to research, and then produce a written Subject Specific Essay (SSE), following an SPRE format (Situation/Problem/Responses/Evaluation), and to present the findings to an audience consisting of students and staff. In the past they did that as an individual project but in summer 2015, during a pilot project with IUG, engineering PS students and their counterparts in Palestine formed small groups in order to research engineering-related scenarios from Gaza. The role of the Gazan students was to mentor the Glasgow-based students by asking questions, directing to appropriate and relevant resources and providing general guidance in research. Over the course of the five-week collaboration, both groups of students had ample opportunities to practise language and develop transferable skills such as team-working, problem-solving, and digital literacies. During the presentation in the last week of the course, transmitted to Gaza via a teleconference link, the PS students presented their findings while their Gazan mentors asked questions and provided feedback. The project finished with a Certificate of Participation award ceremony as well as feedback focus groups which allowed us to evaluate the usefulness of the project and its impact on the students' learning.

We intend to repeat the project in summer 2016 and extend it to the Biomedical group. The engineering students will follow a very similar course of action to the one last year while the biomedical students will form a slightly different partnership with the PS students during which they will jointly carry out the research. This will be reflected during the final presentations too as the Gazan students will actively contribute to the delivery. They will also write up a short report at the end of the project. This differentiation has been planned consciously to meet the diverse employability needs of the Gazan students. It will also allow us to research different models of tele-collaborative partnerships between students and assess their impact on the students' academic and professional development.

Participation in the research involves not only working together at the distance but also filling in pre- and post-project surveys, completing reflective tasks and participating in focus groups to analyse more in depth the impact of such collaboration.

We are hoping that the initiative will be a success for the students at the University of Glasgow, and that it will also help to overcome the current isolation of the students in Gaza, and to improve their own employment prospects by developing the skills listed at the beginning of this document.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can help in different ways:

- PS Students only - by giving access to an electronic copy of the SSE assignment, both first and final draft, that you will produce at the end of the pre-sessional summer course;
- IUG Medical students only – by giving access to an electronic copy of a report that you will produce at the end of the project;
- All students - by giving consent to use of data from the online spaces like Facebook, Wordpress, Padlet and Google Docs that are going to be used to support the communication between the students from the two universities;
- All students - by giving consent to videoing your end-of-project presentation;
- All students - by completing surveys at the beginning and at the end of the project;
- Some students - by participating in focus groups at the end of the project.

If you give consent to use of any of the data above, all the identifying information, that is your name and student number, will be removed. In case of videos, we can ensure that faces are blurred so that you cannot be recognised.

The information will be used to evaluate the project but we would also like to be able to share the experience with a wider academic community through journal articles, conference presentations as well as the project website (<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>).

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your participation in the project, by allowing us to use your assignment and other data, is completely voluntary. You will receive a consent form to sign to confirm your voluntary participation. You can withdraw your participation in the project at any point, and with or without providing an explanation. You have the right to ask any questions about the study, its perceived benefits and risks. You can agree to the use of your SSE/report/online communication, but disagree to being filmed (or vice versa). Before your name is published on the website, you will be asked for your permission. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please ask the project co-ordinator, either in person or by email (see the contact details below).

BENEFITS AND RISKS

We have already outlined the benefits of this initiative: there are no known risks for you. If you are a PS student, participation in the project or lack of it will not affect in any way the results of the course

you are undertaking at the moment or any future courses at the University. If you prefer not to be involved with the UoG/IUG initiative, participants will be able to choose an alternative project, within their field of study.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

As said before, all the identifying information will be removed from the artefacts shared in private spaces, such as Facebook, or from written essays. When referring to the student, neutral forms of address will be used. The original assignments and any online communication will be stored in a password-protected folder and be available only to the project co-ordinator.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this project please talk to the project co-ordinator in person or via e-mail:

Anna Rolinska: anna.rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk

Thanks a lot for considering participation in our project.

2019

PARTICIPATION IN THE EAST PROJECT INVITATION FOR STUDENTS

Dear Student,

Our names are Bill Guariento, Anna Rolinska, Neil Allison and Jolanta Hudson. We are holding a writing and research collaboration between Block C Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) pre-sessional (PS) students at English for Academic Study (EAS) at the University of Glasgow (UoG), and students studying Engineering-related disciplines at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), INACAP Chile, PUCV Chile, and MUST Malawi. We are also holding a writing and research collaboration between Block C Law PS students at EAS at UoG, and students studying Law-related disciplines at IUG.

We all work at EAS and regularly teach international students wishing to study on post-graduate courses or already studying on such courses. Having supported students for a number of years, we think we have become aware of the unique needs such students have when it comes to learning how to conduct literature research, and to effectively summarise the findings (in writing via an academic report, and in speaking via an academic presentation). We are also conscious of the fact that the University aims to support students in both academic and professional development. The UoG Graduate Attributes Matrix (http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183776_en.pdf) clearly outlines the various attributes that the student is expected to develop throughout their studies at the University, for instance team-working skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, digital literacies and cross-cultural awareness. The EAST Project intends to meet those needs.

On the five-week subject-specific pre-sessional (PS) course, the students have to research, and then produce a written Subject Specific Essay (SSE), and to present the findings to an audience consisting of students and staff. In the past they did that as an individual project but in summer 2015, 2016 and 2017, engineering PS students and their counterparts in Palestine formed small groups in order to research engineering-related scenarios from Gaza. The role of the Gazan students was to mentor the Glasgow-based students by asking questions, directing to appropriate and relevant resources, and providing general guidance in research. Over the course of these five-week collaborations, both

groups of students had ample opportunities to practise language and develop transferable skills such as team-working, problem-solving, and digital literacies. During the presentation in the last week of the course, transmitted to Gaza via a teleconference link, the PS students presented their findings while their Gazan mentors asked questions and provided feedback. The project finished with a Certificate of Participation award ceremony as well as feedback focus groups which allowed us to evaluate the usefulness of the project and its impact on the students' learning.

In summer 2017, we extended the EAST Project to link up with SET students at INACAP, Chile. This year, we are further extending EAST, to link up with SET-related students at Pontificia Universidad de Valparaiso (PUCV) Chile, and at the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST). We will also extend the EAST Project to link up Law students, at UoG and IUG.

Participation in the research involves not only working together at the distance but also filling in pre- and post-project surveys, completing reflective tasks and participating in focus groups to analyse more in depth the impact of such collaboration.

We are hoping that the initiative will be a success for the students at UoG, helping to develop the skills listed at the beginning of this document. We also hope that it will help to create useful links between the Global South and North, to improve the employment prospects for your peers at IUG, INACAP, PUCV and MUST.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can help in different ways:

- UoG Students only - by giving access to an electronic copy of the SSE assignment, both first and final draft, that you will produce at the end of the pre-session summer course;
- All students - by giving consent to use of data from the online spaces like Facebook, Wordpress, Padlet and Google Docs that are going to be used to support the communication between the students from the two universities;
- All students - by giving consent to videoing your end-of-project presentation;
- All students - by completing surveys at the beginning and at the end of the project;
- Some students - by participating in focus groups at the end of the project.

If you give consent to use of any of the data above, all the identifying information, that is your name and student number, will be removed. In the case of videos, we can ensure that faces are blurred so that you cannot be recognised.

The information will be used to evaluate the project but we would also like to be able to share the experience with a wider academic community through journal articles, conference presentations as well as the project website (<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>).

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your participation in the project, by allowing us to use your assignment and other data, is completely voluntary. You will receive a consent form to sign to confirm your voluntary participation. You can withdraw your participation in the project at any point, and with or without providing an explanation. You have the right to ask any questions about the study, its perceived benefits and risks. You can agree to the use of your SSE/report/online communication, but disagree to being filmed (or vice versa). Before your name is published on the website, you will be asked for your permission. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please ask the project co-ordinator, either in person or by email (see the contact details below).

BENEFITS AND RISKS

We have already outlined the benefits of this initiative: there are no known risks for you. If you are a PS student, participation in the project or lack of it will not affect in any way the results of the course you are undertaking at the moment or any future courses at the University. If UoG participants prefer not to be involved with the EAST Project, they will be able to choose an alternative project, within their field of study.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

As said before, all the identifying information will be removed from the artefacts shared in private spaces, such as Facebook, or from written essays. When referring to the student, neutral forms of address will be used. The original assignments and any online communication will be stored in a password-protected folder and be available only to the project co-ordinator.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this project please talk to the project co-ordinator in person or via e-mail:

William (Bill) Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

Many thanks for considering participation in our project.

2020

**PARTICIPATION IN A POST-EAST PROJECT FOCUS
GROUP:
INVITATION FOR TEACHERS**

Dear Teacher,

I am conducting research based on the Block C Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) pre-sessional (PS) course held each summer from 2015 through 2019 at English for Academic Study (EAS), involving pre-sessional students at the University of Glasgow, and students studying Engineering-related disciplines at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), INACAP Chile, PUCV Chile, and MUST Malawi.

You have all worked at EAS on this course, and also bring experience of teaching international students wishing to study on post-graduate courses or already studying on such courses. Having supported students for a number of years, I believe you have become aware of the unique needs such students have when it comes to learning how to conduct literature research, and to effectively summarise the findings (in writing via an academic report, and in speaking via an academic presentation). I also believe that you have a good understanding of how academia aims to support students in both academic and professional development. The UoG Graduate Attributes Matrix (http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_183776_en.pdf) clearly outlines the various attributes that the student is expected to develop throughout their studies at the University of Glasgow, for instance team-working skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, digital literacies and cross-cultural awareness.

The EAST Project aimed to meet those needs, but I also believe that there are wider issues worthy of exploration which may have emerged, linked in particular to the combination of pre-sessional students here in Glasgow working with Global South peers in the institutions mentioned above (it is the Global South aspect that makes EAST distinctive). I am keen, too, to explore how (if at all) your participation in the EAST Project has informed your teaching since you worked at EAS.

I hope that, as EAP practitioners, you may find this exploration of underlying issues of interest and potentially of value to your own teaching in future.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can help either:

- By participating in a Focus Group of Block C teachers, or;
- By providing online individual feedback to me

If you give consent to participate, all identifying information will be removed.

The information will be used to evaluate the project but we would also like to be able to share the experience with a wider academic community through journal articles, conference presentations as well as the project website (<https://easttelecollaboration.wordpress.com>).

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your participation in the focus group or provision of online individual feedback is completely voluntary. You will receive a consent form to sign to confirm your voluntary participation. You can withdraw your participation in the project at any point, and with or without providing an explanation. You have the right to ask any questions about the study, its perceived benefits and risks. Before your name is published on the website, you will be asked for your permission. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please ask myself, either in person or by email (see the contact details below).

BENEFITS AND RISKS

I have already outlined the benefits of this initiative: there are no known risks for you. Participation in this research will not affect any future employment at the University.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

As said before, all the identifying information will be removed. When referring to the teachers involved, neutral forms of address will be used. The recording of the focus group and any online communication will be stored in a password-protected folder and be available only to the project co-ordinator.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this project please talk to the project co-ordinator in person or via e-mail:

William (Bill) Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

Many thanks for considering participation in our project.

Sample consent forms

2015

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (University of Glasgow students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the ‘Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Writing Collaboration, University of Glasgow – Islamic University of Gaza’ and understand that Bill Guariento / Anna Rolinska are collecting samples of students’ SSE assignments and recording end-of-course lectures.

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the relevant boxes:

- ☐ I give my consent to the use of my written work for this project
- ☐ I give my consent to the use of my data from the online spaces, like Facebook
- ☐ I give my consent to being filmed during the final presentation for this project
- ☐ I give my consent to being filmed during the final presentation for this project, if my face is blurred
- ☐ I give my consent to participating in an end-of-project feedback session

on the understanding that

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers.
- The original written assignment samples and video files will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date:

Project co-ordinator’s contact details:

Bill Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

English as a Foreign Language Unit,

William (Bill) Guariento
PhD Thesis

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow
Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens
Glasgow, G12 8RS

2015 (continued)

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (Islamic University of Gaza students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the ‘Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Writing Collaboration, University of Glasgow – Islamic University of Gaza’.

Please read the following statements carefully and tick the relevant boxes:

- ☐ I give my consent to the use of my data from the online spaces, like Facebook
- ☐ I give my consent to being recorded during the final videoconference presentation for this project
- ☐ I give my consent to being filmed during the final videoconference presentation for this project, if my face is blurred
- ☐ I give my consent to participating in an end-of-project feedback session

on the understanding that

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers.
- The original written assignment samples and video files will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date:

Project co-ordinator’s contact details:

Bill Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

English as a Foreign Language Unit,

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

University of Glasgow

Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens

Glasgow, G12 8RS
United Kingdom

2016

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (University of Glasgow students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the EAST Project and understand that Anna Rolinska and Bill Guariento are collecting data in order to evaluate the impact of tele-collaborative student partnerships on the students' learning.

Please read the following statements carefully, and circle 'Yes' or 'No' in response to each statement.

Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my written work for this project, including first and final draft of the subject-specific essay.
Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my data (textual and visual) from the online spaces, like Facebook, Padlet or Wordpress, during the telecollaboration with the IUG students.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being filmed during the final video-conferenced project presentations.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being photographed during lessons, presentations, focus groups and any other project-related events.

I give my consent on the understanding that:

- all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised;
- and the anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers;
- any original data, eg written assignments or recordings will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date:

Project co-ordinator's contact details:

Anna Rolinska: anna.rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk

English for Academic Study,

William (Bill) Guariento
PhD Thesis

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow
Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens
Glasgow, G12 8RS

2016 (continued)

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (Islamic University of Gaza SET students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the EAST Project and understand that Anna Rolinska and Bill Guariento are collecting data in order to evaluate the impact of tele-collaborative student partnerships on the students' learning.

Please read the following statements carefully, and circle 'Yes' or 'No' in response to each statement.

Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my data (textual or visual) from the online spaces, like Facebook, Padlet, Wordpress and Google Docs, during the Constructive Feedback phase, during the telecollaboration with Glasgow students and any data produced after the project as part of a survey/focus group.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being recorded/photographed during the final videoconference presentation for this project and the visual record being used for the research and publication purposes.

I give my consent on the understanding that:

- all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised;
- and the anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers;
- any original data, eg written assignments or recordings will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date:

Project co-ordinator's contact details:

Anna Rolinska: anna.rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk

English for Academic Study,

William (Bill) Guariento
PhD Thesis

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow
Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens
Glasgow, G12 8RS

2016 (continued)

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (Islamic University of Gaza Med students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the EAST Project and understand that Anna Rolinska and Bill Guariento are collecting data in order to evaluate the impact of tele-collaborative student partnerships on the students' learning.

Please read the following statements carefully, and circle 'Yes' or 'No' in response to each statement.

Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my data (textual or visual) from the online spaces, like Facebook, Padlet, Wordpress and Google Docs, during the telecollaboration with Glasgow students and any data produced after the project as part of a survey/focus group.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being recorded/photographed during the final videoconference presentation for this project and the visual record being used for the research and publication purposes.
Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my written report summarising the project findings for the research and publication purposes.

I give my consent on the understanding that:

- all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised;
- and the anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers;
- any original data, eg written assignments or recordings will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date: _____

Project co-ordinator's contact details:

Anna Rolinska: anna.rolinska@glasgow.ac.uk

English for Academic Study,

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow

Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens

Glasgow, G12 8RS

2019

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (University of Glasgow students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the EAST Project and understand that Bill Guariento, Anna Rolinska, Neil Allison and Jolanta Hudson are collecting data in order to evaluate the impact of tele-collaborative student partnerships on the students' learning. Please read the following statements carefully, and circle 'Yes' or 'No' in response to each statement.

Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my written work for this project, including first and final draft of the subject-specific essay.
Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my data (textual and visual) from the online spaces, like Facebook, Padlet or Wordpress, during the telecollaboration with the IUG students.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being filmed during the final video-conferenced project presentations.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being photographed during lessons, presentations, focus groups and any other project-related events.

I give my consent on the understanding that:

- all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised;
- and the anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers;
- any original data, eg written assignments or recordings will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date:

Project co-ordinator's contact details:

Bill Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

English for Academic Study,

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow

Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens

Glasgow, G12 8RS

2019 (continued)

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (by Islamic University of Gaza / INACAP / Pontificia Universidad de Valparaiso / Malawi University of Science and Technology students)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for the project participants relating to the EAST Project and understand that Bill Guariento, Anna Rolinska, Neil Allison and Jolanta Hudson are collecting data in order to evaluate the impact of tele-collaborative student partnerships on the students' learning. Please read the following statements carefully, and circle 'Yes' or 'No' in response to each statement.

Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my data (textual or visual) from the online spaces, like Facebook, Padlet, Wordpress and Google Docs, during the Constructive Feedback phase, during the telecollaboration with Glasgow students and any data produced after the project as part of a survey/focus group.
Yes	No	I give my consent to being recorded/photographed during the final videoconference presentation for this project and the visual record being used for the research and publication purposes.

I give my consent on the understanding that:

- all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised;
- and the anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers;
- any original data, eg written assignments or recordings will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

My email address is: _____

Signed by the student: _____

Date: _____

Project co-ordinator's contact details:

Bill Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

English for Academic Study,

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow

Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens
Glasgow, G12 8RS

2020

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA (EAST Teachers)

I _____ (first name and surname) have read the information sheet for EAST Project teachers and understand that Bill Guariento is collecting data in order to evaluate the impact of the EAST Project.

Please read the following statements carefully, and circle 'Yes' or 'No' in response to each statement.

Yes	No	I give my consent to the recording and use of my focus-group oral feedback
Yes	No	I give my consent to the use of my written online feedback

I agree to the processing of data in the context of this project on the understanding that:

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The anonymised material may be used in future publications, both print and online as well as conference papers.
- any original data, e.g. written assignments or recordings in both physical and electronic form will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage (locked physical storage; appropriately encrypted, password-protected devices and University user accounts) at all times;
- My transcribed comments will have a participant number assigned to them (e.g. 'Participant 001'). This will be recorded separately from this consent form so that I cannot be identified.
- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be redacted/ removed. Once this is completed for all questionnaires, the record document linking participant numbers to consent forms will be destroyed, leaving all responses anonymous. This process will be completed by the following date: 24 March 2020.
- I understand that after the data collected has been anonymised, then in accordance with EU legislation (General Data Protection Regulation/ GDPR), it can be used for the purposes of the project without any further reference back to me. However, I understand that I may object if I have legitimate grounds for concern that I remain directly identifiable from the data or that it has been used for purposes other than those originally stated.

- Project materials will be retained in secure storage by the University for ten years for archival purposes (longer if the material is consulted during that time). Consent forms will also be retained for the purposes of record.

FORM CONTINUES OVERLEAF

My email address is: _____

Signed by the teacher: _____

Date:

Project co-ordinator's contact details:

Bill Guariento: william.guariento@glasgow.ac.uk

English for Academic Study,

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow

Hetherington Building, Bute Gardens

Glasgow, G12 8RS

Appendix 5 – University of Glasgow graduate attributes:

https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_183776_smxx.pdf

Email - William Guariento - Our x Media_183776_smxx.pdf x +

gla.ac.uk/media/Media_183776_smxx.pdf

Apps Scholar EAP Workshop 20... WhatsApp tracing pensions Articles OneDrive NORTH Outlook Facebook Pollotshields, Shi... Linguistics at Nort...

University of Glasgow
graduate attributes

The academic abilities, personal qualities and transferable skills which all students will have the opportunity to develop as part of their University of Glasgow experience.

Attribute	Academic Dimension	Personal Dimension	Transferable Dimension
Subject Specialists	Understand and respect the values, principles, methods and limitations of their discipline(s).	Possess a breadth and depth of knowledge within their disciplinary area(s).	Possess discipline-relevant professional skills, knowledge and competencies.
Investigative	Are intellectually curious and engage in the pursuit of new knowledge and understanding.	Are able to locate, analyse and synthesise information from a variety of sources and media.	Are able to investigate problems and provide effective solutions.
Independent and Critical Thinkers	Identify, define and assess complex issues and ideas in a researchable form.	Exercise critical judgement in evaluating sources of information and constructing meaning.	Apply creative, imaginative and innovative thinking and ideas to problem solving.
Resourceful and Responsible	Are experienced in self-directed learning and authentic research-led enquiry.	Are motivated, conscientious and self-sufficient individuals capable of substantial independent work.	Manage their personal performance to meet expectations and demonstrate drive, determination, and accountability.
Effective Communicators	Articulate complex ideas with respect to the needs and abilities of diverse audiences.	Present their ideas clearly and concisely in high quality written and spoken English.	Communicate clearly and confidently, and listen and negotiate effectively with others.
Confident	Defend their ideas in dialogue with peers and challenge disciplinary assumptions.	Possess excellent interpersonal and social skills fostered within an internationalised community.	Demonstrate enthusiasm, leadership and the ability to positively influence others.
Adaptable	Experience multi-disciplinary and/or inter-disciplinary learning in an internationally renowned institution.	Respond flexibly and adapt their skills and knowledge to excel in unfamiliar situations.	Demonstrate resilience, perseverance and positivity in multi-tasking, dealing with change and meeting new challenges.
Experienced Collaborators	Engage with the scholarly community and respect others' views and perspectives.	Are experienced in working in groups and teams of varying sizes and in a variety of roles.	Conduct themselves professionally and contribute positively when working in a team.
Ethically and Socially Aware	Consider and act upon the ethical, social and global responsibilities of their actions.	Welcome exposure to the richness of multi-cultural and international experiences, opportunities and ways of thinking.	Have a practical and contemporary knowledge of relevant professional, ethical and legal frameworks.
Reflective Learners	Use feedback productively to reflect on their work, achievements and self-identity.	Set aspirational goals for continuing personal, professional and career development.	Identify and articulate their skills, knowledge and understanding confidently and in a variety of contexts.

Appendix 6 – Summary of pre-sessional programme, including schematic form to show how EAST fits:

The pre-sessional EAP course within which EAST sits lasts 40-weeks, though the majority of students only attend in the summer, according to their language proficiency, for 5-week Blocks (A, B, then C). Block C is the culmination of the pre-sessional course, in which students are divided for the first time into subject-specific groups. Table 1 (below) outlines the 2015 EAST project, which paralleled the final 4th August to 4th September 5-week Block C of the pre-sessional course that year.

Block C begins on 4th August, when new arrivals in Glasgow are combined with students continuing from Block B. Hence all of the ‘actions’ of the EAST project prior to this involve work by IUG to select the Gazan participants, and then online interactions between course-organisers in Glasgow and the IUG students, in order to prepare the IUG students for the mentoring roles they will carry out once EAST begins.

In 2015, there is only one synchronous overlap between IUG and Glasgow-based students, i.e. in the end-of-course oral project-presentations held on Day 1, Week 5, before live audiences in Glasgow and Gaza. All other EAST project-related contacts between Glasgow-based groups and their IUG partners in 2015 are asynchronous, and held outwith classtime. Thus the pre-sessional course itself are basically separate: the pre-sessional course consists of language- and skills-based inputs; the EAST project provides ways for Glasgow-based students to actualise these inputs, via a context within which to produce an assessed SPRE (Situation-Problem-Responses-Evaluation) essay, and an assessed oral presentation.

Though the basic organisation of the EAST project within Block C has remained similar post-2015, ways in which the course subsequently evolved are outlined after the table.

Time	Action (UoG)	Action (IUG)
------	--------------	--------------

Tuesday 30th June	UoG sends IUG a list of anticipated students and their fields	IUG sends UoG an introductory video about IUG (with links to Gaza issues) to be posted on UoG moodle
Wednesday 8th July		IUG selects participants (maximum 26)
Monday 13th July 10 a.m. UK time	UoG & IUG hold joint online introductory session for IUG students to familiarise them with the project	
End of July	UoG English for Academic Study gives IUG students online input on how to give constructive criticism, and a generic task to complete	IUG sends UoG a written list of potential problems for our students to research (maybe 2 or 3 problems per group, to allow UoG students some flexibility in choice)
Block C week 1	UoG students are introduced to the SPRE project. Via skype, UoG students learn about their field-specific problem from IUG students	IUG students send UoG staff their generic constructive criticism task Via skype, IUG students explain their field-specific problem to UoG students
Block C week 2	UoG students research the field-specific problem they have chosen UoG staff provide f/b on IUG students' generic constructive criticism task	
Block C week 3	Via skype, UoG students give IUG students an oral overview of their (3?) responses	IUG students provide an oral evaluation of these responses
Block C week 4	UoG students write up the evaluation section, on the basis of week 3's IUG	

	constructive criticism, and on further research	
Block C week 5, Monday 31st August	UoG students hand in their completed Subject Specific Essays to English for Academic Study staff, then present their SSEs (14 approx. groups of 3, x 15 minutes per group) via videoconference, taking questions from their peers in Glasgow and at IUG.	
Block C week 5, midweek	UoG staff return marked subject-specific essays	IUG students prepare brief video-clips on elements of day-to-day life in Gaza related to the SSEs
Block C week 5, final day	UoG students view brief video clips sent (via Youtube or Dropbox?) by their IUG partners that illustrate elements of day-to-day life in Gaza related to the SSEs	
	IUG and UoG students write a reflection on the experience	
	Videoconference party!	

Table 1: fit of EAST project within 2015 Pre-Sessional course

Changes post-2015:

- From 2016 onwards, the online preparation for IUG participants has taken the form of a dedicated course, delivered over two weeks by University of Glasgow staff, which is available via Creative Commons (see Paper 7: ‘Constructive Feedback’).
- From 2017 onwards, the final presentations have no longer been videoconferenced live, due to connectivity issues / growing numbers in Glasgow / excessive heat in Gaza. IUG students have delivered pre-recorded contributions, which are combined with live contributions from their Glasgow-based partners and live-streamed via Facebook to allow questions from the audience (following live in Glasgow and online in Gaza).

- From 2018 onwards, in order to create an immediate ‘bond’ between partners, a Friday Week 1 slot has been timetabled for synchronous meetings (Skype, Whatsapp, Zoom....) between IUG and Glasgow-based participants.
- From 2018 onwards, IUG students have been asked to provide individual explanatory videos, outlining the nature of the engineering challenge facing Gaza, prior to the course (rather than in the final week). Though this is more daunting, and has proved a deterrent for some potential IUG partners, it serves to better contextualise the subsequent interactions.